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# The Mennonite Quarterly Review

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# EDITORIAL

At times oversimplifications and hasty generalizations about the Anabaptist movement have led to assertions that the movement was altogether a lower class movement and that it had its roots in the social and economic unrest of the peasants and small craftsmen of the Reformation period. In fact it has even been suggested by no less a historian than Preserved Smith that the Anabaptists were the "Bolsheviks" of the Reformation. It has also been claimed that the Anabaptists were illiterate and unlearned as a whole. Dr. Paul Dedic of Gratz, Austria, has subjected these assertions to a critical examination as they apply to one segment of the Anabaptist movement, namely that of Austrian and Hapsburg territories. His conclusions, based on the careful study of the original sources, are presented in an article in this issue with the title "The Social Background of the Austrian Anabaptists" (*Die soziale Herkunft der österreichischen Taufgesinnten*). The editors welcome Dr. Dedic to the circle of contributors to the Mennonite Quarterly Review. Dr. Dedic was a close friend and pupil of the late lamented Dr. Johann Loserth, and is carrying on the tradition of exacting and sympathetic scholarship in the field of Anabaptist history which his illustrious predecessor so splendidly exemplified. Further articles from Dr. Dedic's pen will appear in later issues.

Strasburg stands out in the Reformation period as the most tolerant city in all Europe. As a result of this tolerance it early became a refuge for persecuted Anabaptists, and continued to be the seat of a Mennonite congregation until well into the last century. At the middle of the 16th century it was in fact the outstanding center of the whole Anabaptist movement in central Europe, particularly for the Swiss Brethren. Here some of the great leaders of that group, such as Sattler and Marpeck, labored in the early days, and here the great conferences of the sixteen fifties and sixties were held. John Horsch tells of the significance of the Strasburg center for the Anabaptist movement in his enlightening article in this number.

The social aspect of Mennonite history has received little attention, in fact it is still largely an unexplored field. The Hutterian Brethren have received considerable attention because of their unique Christian communistic scheme of life, but the fact has been largely overlooked that a unique emphasis on mutual aid has been one of the outstanding characteristics of Mennonitism throughout its history, particularly in South Russia and North America. J. Winfield Fretz, now a graduate student at the University of Chicago, has dug the first spade in this rich soil with his master's thesis on "Mutual Aid Among the Mennonites." He is continuing his study in this field in the form of a projected doctoral dissertation. In the meantime the Review is glad to publish some of the results of his work in the form of two articles which represent the two major chapters of his master's thesis. The first article which appears in this issue describes the principle of mutual aid and illustrates it from Mennonite history and current practice, while the second article will describe the various types of mutual aid practiced in one community, that around Mountain Lake, Minnesota. In these days when the desire for what is known as social security has become almost overwhelming and is leading to significant changes in our American social order, it is most interesting and profitable to note how the Mennonites have attempted to solve this problem on the basis of a Christian social philosophy.

We publish in this issue the personal narrative of a visit during the past summer to the Mennonite refugee colonies of Brazil and Paraguay by Dean H. S. Bender of Goshen College, who is also editor-in-chief of the Review. The trip was undertaken at the request of the Mennonite Central Committee which as the representative relief organization of all the major Mennonite groups of the United States, played a significant role in the movement of Russian Mennonite Refugees to South America in 1930. This Committee owns a tract of over 300,000 acres in the Paraguayan Chaco on which the colony in Paraguay is located, and has been sponsor of the colony from the beginning. It is also intimately related to the settlements in both Brazil and Paraguay as guarantor of the debt owed by the colonists to the German government for the original transportation from Europe to South America. As a member of the Mennonite Central Committee, Dr. Bender made a study of the present status of the colonies as a basis for the formulation of the future policies of the Committee.

We resume also with this issue our book review section which it had been necessary to omit sometime ago. The Review plans to present discussions of significant literature in Anabaptist and Mennonite history which have appeared since the book review section was discontinued and to continue reviews of current publications as they appear.

THE
Mennonite Quarterly
Review

VOLUME XIII JANUARY, 1939 NUMBER 1

# THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE AUSTRIAN ANABAPTISTS*

Dr. Paul Dedic

In view of the extensive spread of the Anabaptist movement in the Austrian and Hapsburg territories at the time of the Reformation, it should certainly be profitable to undertake a thorough investigation of the social background of the chief leaders and promoters of the Anabaptist teachings as well as of the social circles where these ideas were most effectively propagated. It is true that the social origins of the leaders are not always indicated in the extant chronicles and letters of the Anabaptists nor in the official documents dealing with the suppression of the movement, which have been preserved in such large numbers. Nevertheless the information which has been preserved about many of the Anabaptists permits conclusions about the social background of the movement in general. Naturally the earliest Anabaptist leaders, such as Hubmaier, must be included in this study, men who advocated adult baptism but did not support many items of the later movement or even rejected them, such as the communistic system which was fully developed only by the Hutterian Brethren.

*Translated from the German.

It is well known as the result of the considerable literature which has been produced in this field, especially the pioneering studies by Beck and Loserth and their successors Loesche and Wolkan, that this branch of the Anabaptist movement had its origin in Switzerland and what was at that time called "Vorderösterreich." In the year 1527 the Tyrol became the great mission field of the Anabaptist apostles, who extended their labors into the most remote Alpine valleys with an almost unexampled success. The fervor with which a large portion of the pious Tyrol population laid hold upon this new teaching is indicated by the fact that even the most severe measures of persecution by the government were ineffective. For instance, the Tyrol government reports in February, 1530, that for the past two years not a day had passed on which it was not necessary to deal with this danger, and that during this period nearly 700 persons had been executed because of their adherence to Anabaptism.[1] Another source mentions the number of 1,000 adherents who were burned, beheaded or drowned in the course of three years,[2] a number which is probably correct.

Tyrol remained to the end of the century on the one hand the classic mission field of Anabaptism and on the other hand the reservoir in which the forces were collected which, from the time of Jacob Hutter, were diverted to Moravia and devoted to the realization of the communistic ideal which had been proclaimed. For it was in Moravia that the toleration which the Anabaptists enjoyed gave the opportunity to realize this program. The intensity of the migration into Moravia, which was very dangerous because of the vigilance of the authorities and which was carried through in small groups called "Völker" by the brethren, which usually traveled the water route on the Inn and Danube rivers and thence from the mouth of the "Wachau" through the forests to Moravia, varied. Jacob Hutter himself led many hundreds to Moravia in the years 1529 to 1535. Later there were occasionally unusual "emigration years," as for instance in 1587, when a total of 1600 persons (the *Chronicles* report laconically "viel Volks") arrived in the brotherhood settlements in Moravia, "von deutsch und oberländischen Landvolk."[3] As a result of the exceptional conditions in Moravia such as tolerance, immigration, opportunity for development, the center of gravity of the movement was shifted from the Tyrol to Moravia, and in the meanwhile the movement was altogether sup-

1. Loserth, *Anabaptismus i. Tirol,* Wien, 1891, p. 494.

2. Kirchmaier, *Fontes rer. Austr. I,* p. 487.

3. Christ. Erhard, *Gründl., etc., Historie,* Ingolstadt, 1587, fol. 41 b and Chr. And. Fischer, 54 *erhebliche Ursachen,* Ingolstadt, 1607, p. 82.

pressed in lower Austria, Carinthia, and Styria, and largely suppressed in upper Austria. But even after Moravia became the center of the movement the long continuing martyrdom in the Tyrol continued to exercise a strong religious stimulus on the brethren who were living in security in Moravia, as is indicated by the many songs and epistles. Loesche has well characterized the difference between the two countries when he says, the Tyrol was "das Taten und Totenland," while Moravia was "das gelobte Land" of the Austrian Anabaptists.[4] As late as the sixties and seventies there was an active campaign for members in the Tyrol. Hans Mändl is said to have won 400 persons himself. Later the activity gradually died down. About 1600 there were still Anabaptists in the Tyrol, but the number of adherents had become small and in the following years it altogether disappeared. The cause of this is less to be sought in the effective working of the revived Roman Catholicism, as Friedmann believes,[5] than in the final success of the governmental measures which had been enforced uninterruptedly for almost 75 years and in the tribulations which were now at last harrying Moravian Anabaptists also.

Having surveyed briefly the movement in a general way, let us now take up the problem which was stated at the beginning of this article. What type of person was it that joined the Anabaptists? Among all the German territories the movement found its relatively largest number of adherents in the Tyrol. Those who joined the group were throughout persons of strong religious convictions, even to some extent enthusiasts. The chief attraction was the religious communism of the group, the "Gemeinschaft." These people felt themselves to be continuers of the primitive Christian ideal as depicted in the accounts in the book of Acts, II: 44ff, and IV: 32ff and similar passages. It is not necessary here to point out the merits of this doctrine as expounded chiefly in Peter Riedemann's *Rechenschaft.* Dr. Lydia Müller has already done this in her excellent monograph. But it was not the theological aspect of the movement which exerted such a powerful influence on thousands that it can almost be called magic, especially in the face of the cruel measures of the government as for instance in the Tyrol. Friedmann is right in his assertion, "it was never the dogma and theology of the Anabaptists which achieved such powerful effects, but rather solely the manner of life and the consistency in religious thinking which rejected all compromise."[6] The fact that many a confused fanatic

4. G. Loesche, *Tirolensia,* Wien-Leipzig, 1926, p. 1.
5. R. Friedmann, *Die Briefe der österr. Täufer,* Leipzig, 1929, p. 36.
6. *Ibid.*

joined the group cannot vitiate the fact that those who joined the Anabaptists were chiefly men filled with a holy zeal and of superior worth.

### *The Individuality of the Moravian Anabaptists*

In the light of the announced and achieved religious communism it is understandable that in general few wealthy persons joined the Anabaptists, for it was more difficult for such persons to become enthusiastic for the principle of no private property of the individual, than for those who had little to give up. However, it will be pointed out later that in spite of this there were not a few persons of means who sacrificed their possessions for the "Gemeinschaft." (It might be noted here that the "equality" which was set up in the Moravian Hutterian churches was not practiced in a mechanical way, for the officials known as "Diener des Worts" occupied a favored position even in respect to their daily manner of life, which did indeed later on lead to friction.[7] The aged and the sick also were treated as exceptions.)

Just as erroneous as the oft-repeated assertion that only the poor or propertyless classes, what today are often called the "proletariat," constituted the core of the Austrian Anabaptists, is the occasional assertion that it was only the uneducated who were attracted to them. This assertion was first made by their contemporary opponents in the Catholic camp, as for instance Pastor Christoph Erhard, who asserted that the brethren were only "coarse, ignorant, inexperienced and foolish poor people," and his equally pedantic and ill-natured successor, Dr. Andreas Fischer, the pastor in Feldsberg, who went so far as to say, "What sort of doctors and masters have been produced by your learning? What sort of histories or other learned books have gone out from you?" etc., and who asserted that they were "full coarse, fleshly, ignorant, unlearned persons, a mob collected from the common rabble," that they were despisers of the liberal arts ("Do they not condemn all higher schools? Do they not destroy the learned?"), and of the Bible.[8] These accusations were as unjust as they were immoderate. For the Moravian Hutterians possessed an almost model school system. Medical learning blossomed among them. Even the common people from the Tyrol, or from Switzerland or other German territories who migrated to Moravia, were as skillful in speaking as in writing. It is from them that the Chroniclers came for the

7. Loserth, *Kommunismus der mähr. wiedertäufer,* Wien, 1894, p. 229, and L. Müller, *Der Kommunismus der mähr. Widertäufer,* Leipzig, 1927, p. 104 ff.

8. The works cited in footnote 3.

most part. Friedmann has shown that most of the 74 authors of the almost 400 extant letters were artisans or peasants.[9] The "Schulmeister der Gemeinde," Hieronymus Käls, who was burned at the stake in Vienna in 1536, knew Latin.[10] And even though brethren were occasionally employed as "Schreiber," an illiterate among the leading brethren was such an exception that it was especially noted, as was the case for instance with Niklas Geyersbüchler, who was executed at Innsbruck in 1567. Accordingly it is not possible to condemn the Anabaptists as being unlearned, nor enemies of learning. Wolkan is right however in asserting, "they limited themselves to specific fields of learning; theology and history were the branches which they promoted."[11] Their historical tradition, with its firm grasp of the memory of the world-conquering faith of their martyrs, was the source of much of their religious strength. The beautifully written and artistically bound *Geschichtsbücher* testify today to the value which was placed upon these books in earlier times as well as by their descendants in America today. Their theological treatises, with the exception of the writings of Hubmaier, a foreigner, were not composed by theologians but by "laymen." Some of these treatises constitute the few printed books of the Austrian Anabaptists who otherwise depended solely on manuscript writings. A late treatise bears a title which is characteristic for the later period, *Vom Mangel an Hochgelehrten in der Gemein (de), wie so gar kein Hochgelehrter unter unserm Mittel erfunden wird.*[12] It may be true that the brotherhood lacked "Hochgelehrte," but the knowledge and learning, which even these later treatises reveal, demonstrate that there must have been an equal lack of "Ungelehrte."

In the following survey, which does not profess any claim to exhaustiveness in the limits even of the rather small field chosen, it is difficult to find the right classification for the social background of the Anabaptists. I have decided to follow the political class distinction which obtained in the Austrian territories involved in our discussion in the sixteenth century, namely, clergy, nobility, and freemen, to which I will add three other classes which were not politically recognized in those days, namely, peasants, laborers, and artisans, (among the latter the entrepreneurs were recognized as freemen). State officials were also reckoned with the freemen. The high rank of the clergy applied, however, only to the prelates, of

9. Friedmann, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

10. Beck, *Geschichtsbücher der Wiedertäufer*, Wien, 1883, and Loserth's article, *Menn. Lexikon II.*, 1933, p. 453 f.

11. Wolkan, *Die Hutterer*, Wien, 1918.

12. Friedmann, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

whom only one is known to have become an Anabaptist, whereas the ordinary clergy (priests and monks) who came mostly from the ranks of freemen and peasants, played such an important role at the beginning of the Anabaptist movement that it seems justifiable to place them in a separate class.

In all of these groups there were wealthy and poor people, and it is worthy of note that not only the poor but also frequently those possessing property joined the brethren. The possessions of these wealthier persons were very welcome to the brethren, since they contributed greatly to the establishment of the Moravian "Haushaben," being useful for the purchase and lease of land and the acquisition of cattle and implements, as well as serving as operating capital and reserve for hard times. It must be remembered that it always took considerable time for the newly established communistic economy of a new "Haushaben" to produce sufficient to cover the needs of the members as well as the demands of the business, and much more time to produce a surplus. It should be remembered, especially, that the Moravian nobles imposed heavy taxes and payments of various kinds as compensation for the protection which they granted the Hutterites for many decades. And in the last two decades of their stay in Moravia, which came to an end with expulsion order of Kaiser Ferdinand II in 1622, they suffered great losses from billetting, plundering and ravaging by soldiers, which put such a great strain on their economic resources that they could not have withstood all this without a considerable capital reserve.

It has already been shown that except for the contrary position of several forerunners who were not normative for the later development, the communism which was practiced in the Moravian settlements was a peculiarity of Austrian Anabaptism, and that it was primarily Jacob Hutter who had begun to lead to Moravia the people who had been won for the brotherhood in the Tyrol. By no means all of the emigrants could turn their property into cash, and for many the emigration was a genuine flight in connection with which everything had to be left behind, including the child in the cradle and the other small children who could not only not have survived the flight, but would have been a hindrance to the others. The property which was left behind became the possession of the state exchequer, which usually devoted it, as also the property of the executed members, to the rearing of the children who were left behind, either in whole or in part. The archives of the Tyrol government are full of records of such abandoned Anabaptist property, a proof

that in very many cases it was not the wholly propertyless who followed the call to Moravia. The same archives also contain records which testify of the folly which not only burned people but also burned their houses as a supposedly deterrent example.

The estate of an Anabaptist who was executed in 1529 in Hall was estimated at 400 florins. Six of a number of refugees who fled from Rattenberg in July of the same year were well-to-do. An inventory of the property of an Anabaptist who fled from Kufstein totalled over 1200 florins, while a list of confiscated Anabaptist property prepared by the attorney of the court in Innsbruck in the autumn of 1530 totalled 1,000 florins.[13] The *Geschichtsbücher* report concerning Hutter himself, that after his return from the parole in 1529 he "sent one group after another together with all their possessions to join the faithful." This process he repeated in 1533 when he himself upon his return to the Tyrol brought with him "a temporal gift," "a sacrifice of sweetness," to repay a loan.[14] This brought upon him the unjust accusation by his opponents that he had accepted many, as for example Jörg Fasser, only for the sake of their money.[15] In April, 1543, the government complained to the king that "many simple people," among whom "the wealthy were most easily" persuaded by the preachers, left the Tyrol. Among several Anabaptists who emigrated to Moravia in 1555 there were two brothers named Heugen, who were able to take with them a sizable sum as a part of their possessions, and yet had to leave behind property to the value of 12,000 florins.[16] In 1560 several emigrants left Schlanders "with much money."[17] In June 1561 several persons fled from Kitzbüchel, among whom was one who was said to have carried with him about 1000 florins. In the seventies one often finds mention of claims which particularly Swiss emigrants made on property which they had left behind them in their homeland, and especially claims on inheritances which had fallen due in the meanwhile.[18] Such claims were frequently supported by the Moravian nobles on whose land the emigrants were living. In 1585 a certain Ursula Reichart, who was living in Stignitz, made claim upon her relatives, whom she also tried to persuade to move to Mor-

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13. *Die Kopialbücher Causa Domini* II. u. III, at numerous places, but also, e. g., *Embieten-u. Befehlbuch* 1529, *An die kgl. Majetät;* also *Pestarchiv* XVIII.

14. Beck, *op. cit.,* p. 86, and Wolkan, *Geschichtbuch der Hutterischen Brüder,* Macleod, 1923, pp. 66, 76 et passim.

15. Müller, *op. cit.,* p. 90.

16. Loserth, *Anabaptismus,* p. 184; *Kommunismus,* p. 243.

17. Loesche, *Tirolensia,* p. 23.

18. Loserth, *Anabaptismus* and *Kommunismus.*

avia, for the payment of a sum which had been left behind with them.[19] The Zurich Council felt itself obliged in 1612 to forbid the emigrants who were going to Moravia to take their money with them. But six years later even such a one as Kardinal Dietrichstein interceded with the Bernese council on behalf of one Kaspar Roth, an Anabaptist subject of his living in Nikolsburg, to secure the payment of an inheritance which had been withheld from him.[20] This selection of examples may well suffice to show that there were propertied persons who joined the Anabaptists.

Now let us examine the above-mentioned six classes as sources of membership for the Anabaptist movement.

### 1. *Clergy*

Many priests and monks of the Roman clergy, who had temporarily joined the Lutheran or Zwinglian Reformation, sooner or later became dissatisfied with the slow and inadequate progress of these movements which did not satisfy their more radical demands, fell into disagreement with their groups in the matter of infant baptism and finally left these movements and furnished the leadership for the new Anabaptist movement. The first of these leaders in the Hapsburg territories was Dr. Balthasar Hubmaier, who was resident in Nikolsburg after July, 1526. About the same time Nikolsburg became the home of a long list of former priests, such as Martin Göschl with his chaplain, Niklas, Leonhard Schiemer and Hans Schlaffer, Dr. Johannes Wunderl (Bünderlin) and also probably Thomas Waldhauser. The latter two it is true stood with Hans Hut in the latter's conflict with Hubmaier. Four of the clergy who were in office in Nikolsburg when Hubmaier arrived joined the Anabaptists, namely Hans Spitalmaier and Oswald Glaidt who originally came from Bavaria, and Augustin and Bastian. Most of these suffered a martyr's death. Hubmaier was burned at the stake in Vienna March 10, 1528, while his brave wife, who came from an old freeman's family, was drowned three days later. Göschl, son of a freeman in Iglau, formerly abbot of a nunnery and auxiliary bishop, the only former prelate among the Austrian Anabaptists, died in prison. Schiemer, at first candidate for the priesthood, then five years a "Barefoot Friar" (Barfüsser), who served as a missionary in Upper Austria after his removal from Nikolsburg while he followed the trade of a tailor and who was the first "bishop" in that territory, was beheaded at Rattenberg on the Inn January 14,

19. *Reg. Arch.*, Innsbruck, *Ferdinandea* XXVII.
20. *Fürsterzb. Arch. Kremsier, lose Korrespn.* 1618.

1528 and "burned to powder," after he had written a brave confession which is still preserved.[21] The former priest Hans Schlaffer soon thereafter shared his fate at Schwaz in the Tyrol. Bünderlin, whose labors extended from Upper Austria as far as Strasburg, was also a martyr according to the opinion of his biographer Nikoladoni. Thoman Waldhauser, once a chaplain at Grein on the Danube, was burned at the stake in Brünn on good Friday, 1528. Oswald Glaydt, first a Catholic priest, then a Lutheran preacher, and who separated from Hubmaier and was the soul of a circle of Anabaptists in Vienna, was drowned in 1545 in the Danube after a year and a half in prison.[22]

One of the most active Anabaptist apostles in Austria, Wolfgang Brandhuber, had been "pastor at Linz" before he entered upon his career as missionary as an itinerant tailor's apprentice. He suffered martyrdom in 1529 in Linz.[23]

In the Tyrol, also, former priests were zealous as Anabaptists. In Kitzbüchel in 1527 a chaplain Paul joined the Anabaptists about the same time that the former monk and at that time miner Jörg Fasser (he died in 1537 as a martyr) joined in Schwaz. In Rattenberg the former priest Virgil Plattner, who also became a martyr, joined the movement. In the year 1529 the priest Benedikt of Brunneck joined, as did the Kitzbüchel chaplain Jakob Parzner, who it is true later recanted as he lay in prison in Augsburg. One of the most zealous apostles in the Tyrol, following his expulsion from Switzerland, and who was in reality the founder of this branch of the Anabaptists, was the former monk, Georg vom Hause Jakob, called Blaurock, who came in May, 1529, to the Tyrol, and caused the authorities much trouble as a result of his very successful activity, until he fell into their hands and was burned at the stake at Clausen on September 6, 1529.[24]

Two other Swiss apostles came to Moravia, Wolfgang Ulle (Ulimann), a fellow monk with Blaurock who led a "Volk" to Moravia in 1528, but was captured when he attempted to repeat the exploit, and died as a martyr; and Wilhelm Reublin, a Swabian by birth, the first priest in the canton of Zurich to marry, who also became an Anabaptist preacher. He came to the church at Austerlitz

21. *Handschr.* 559 *i. mähr. Land. Arch. i. Brünn.*

22. G. Bossert, *Hans Bünderlins Vorgeschichte, i. Jahrbuch d. Gesellschaft f. d. Gesch. d. Protestms. i. Oesterreich XI.* 1890. *H. B. spätere Gesch. XIII.* 1892, again *H. B. XV.* 1894; Beck, *Gesch. B.;* Loserth, *Hubmaier;* Nikoladoni, *Bünderlin;* W. Mau, *Balth. Hubmaier,* Berlin, 1912; *Menn. Lexikon;* Wolkan, *Gesch. Buch.*

23. Beck, *op. cit.,* p. 88.

24. Beck, Wolkan, Loserth, *Anabaptismus.*

in 1529, but did not play a very successful role, for he was condemned "as a false Ananias." Thereafter he went to Znaim where he is mentioned in 1559.[25]

Two other priests deserve mention who are of significance for the Anabaptist movement. The first of these is Leonhard Lochmaier, who was baptized after eight years as a Roman Catholic priest, then labored as one of the Hutterian Brethren in Moravia, Lower Austria and Slovakia until his martyrdom in the Tyrol. After he had been formerly unfrocked he was beheaded in November, 1538, in Brixen. The second is the Bavarian Leonhard Dax, who had been fifteen years a Roman Catholic priest, last a pastor in the Tyrol, who joined the Hutterian brethren about 1558. From Moravia, where he was one of the most active members, he was sent in 1566 to the Palatinate. There he courageously maintained his testimony during his imprisonment in Alzey. He was one of the few of the above-mentioned leaders who was permitted a peaceful end. He died in 1574 in Moravia.[26]

It is evident therefore, that no small number of former priests were found among the ranks of the leaders of the Austrian Anabaptist movement, most of whom had the faith to face a martyr's death. Later former priests are no longer found in the movement.[27]

### 2. *Nobility*

Under the classification of nobles who became Anabaptists, the first to be mentioned are the Nikolsburg barons of the famous family of Liechtenstein, namely Leonard and his nephew Hans, the protectors of Hubmaier, to whom the latter dedicated several of his booklets which were written and printed at Nikolsburg. Both men were adherents of the Anabaptists although there is record only of Leonard's baptism. Even after the king of Austria had forced them to deliver Hubmaier, both of the barons remained protectors of the Anabaptists. Leonard probably continued until his death about 1534 as a member of the Anabaptists. He did not belong to the Hutterites but rather to the Swiss Brethren.[28]

In Upper Austria it is probable that Dorothea Jörger of Tolet, a member of one of the oldest families of the country, was a member of the Anabaptists for a time, although she finally joined the

25. Beck and G. Bossert, *Wilh. Reublin i. Znaim, Jahrbuch* XIII. Wien, 1892.

26. Beck; Loserth, *Anabaptismus;* Wolkan, *Geschichtbuch.*

27. Mentioned in Friedmann, *op. cit.*, p. 54. The Lienhard Kaiser belongs to the Lutheran Reformation in spite of his mention in the Hutterian churches. Sattler's activity in Austria has not been proved.

28. Article by Loserth in *Menn. Lexikon* II. p. 650 ff.

Lutheran reformation. The wife of the imperial captain Hans Katzianer, called "die Maxanderin," was baptized in 1530, and refused to accept the proferred instructions of the bishop. King Ferdinand, of whom Katzianer was a favorite, finally abandoned the latter. It is not certain whether he also joined the Anabaptists, but it is known that he suffered a tragic death in Hungary as a refugee.[29]

In the Tyrol the family of Anton von Wolkenstein, who at that time lived chiefly in the region of Taufers and Brunneck, became involved in the Anabaptist movement. As early as 1527 Anton himself was brought to trial the first time. In the course of his trial he was imprisoned for some time in the fearful Innsbruck "Kräuterturm". The trial lasted a long time, for he was unwilling to give up his Anabaptist belief. Finally in 1534, after his wife Elsbeth had recanted and he himself was permitted a private recantation, he gave up his faith. The trial of Siegmund von Wolkenstein, which lasted two years longer and likewise ended with his recantation and release, brought to light the fact that members of this family had visited the brethren in Moravia. The trial of Helena von Freiberg of Schloss Münichau, the protector of the Kitzbüchel Anabaptists, also ended with her recantation and release in 1534. After a long period of uncertainty she finally returned to the Roman Catholic Church. In the year 1539 the widow Agnes von Waltenhofen of the old family of Trautmannsdorf, together with her daughter, fled to the church in Moravia.[30]

Another nobleman who joined the Anabaptists was Michel Feldtaler, formerly an administrator of the principality of Falkenstein, who was chosen minister by the Hutterites in 1564. He was highly respected in the church and died in 1587. The *Chronicles* mention one more nobleman who came to the church in 1566 from Italy, a certain count Hans Georg "von grossem Stamme," whose family is not named. He was secretly drowned by the Venetians on the occasion of his attempt to bring his wife whom he had left behind.[31] Thus although the nobility was not largely represented among the Anabaptists, it nevertheless was not lacking.

### 3. *The Freemen*

According to the assertion of Nikoladoni, most of the Anabaptists in Upper Austria (Steyr, Linz, Wels, Gmunden, and other places) came from the class of freemen. They are to be sought

29. J. Loserth, *Eine neue Quelle z. Gesch. d. Wiedertäufer i. Steiermark, Jahrbuch* LVI. Wien, 1935.

30. Loserth, *Anabaptismus.*

31. Beck, *op. cit.,* and Wolkan, *Geschichtbuch.*

chiefly among the independent artisans and tradesmen, as well as among those who were employed by them. The latter group, however, we wish to treat as a separate group, "the common people" (*die kleinen Leute*), although it must be admitted that the distinction between these two groups is somewhat difficult.

The government officials also came for the most part from the class of freemen, since only the top level of positions was limited to the nobility. One of the most outstanding personalities among this group was Pilgram Marpeck, a mine superintendent of Rattenberg in the Tyrol since 1525, one of the most gifted engineers of his time. Because of his adherence to the Anabaptists in January, 1528, he was removed from his office, after he had escaped persecution by flight. He was the construction engineer for the very skillfully constructed flumes and canals which supplied the imperial city of Strasburg with water and lumber from the Black Forest. An extensive book of his entitled *Verantwortung* was republished in 1929 through the efforts of Christian Hege and Johann Loserth.[32] Two additional writings of this important man which have been discovered by Hege await publication. Another high official of the salt mines in the Tyrol, Anton Stoss of Hall, son of a prothonotary, was accused of being an Anabaptist in 1528. One of the most zealous Anabaptist apostles in the Tyrol, and who was most bitterly persecuted by the government, was Onophrius Griesinger, at one time a mining official in Salzburg. The authorities placed a great price on his head and finally succeeded in capturing him. After a steadfast confession of his faith he was burned alive at Brixen, October 31, 1538.[33]

In the Styrian Anabaptist group two artists, Kaspar and Kilian, played an important role.[34] The printer Simprecht Sorg, a Swiss, published Hubmaier's writings on his press in Nikolsburg, 1526-27. The bookseller Balthasar Fest was executed in 1529 in Innsbruck as an Anabaptist and his property confiscated.

Two brothers by the name of Freisleben (Eleutherobius), Leonhard and Christoph, both school teachers, one in Linz and the other in Wels, were the leaders of the Upper Austrian Anabaptist movement in 1527 together with Hans Hut. The former published the booklet *Von der wahrhaftigen Taufe,* although this did not hinder him later in becoming an opponent of his former associates. His

32. Appeared 1929 in *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte der oberdeutschen Taufgesinnten im 16. Jahrhundert.* On Marpeck cf. Beck, and Loserth, *Anabaptismus.*

33. *Ibid.* Also Wolkan, *Geschichtbuch.*

34. See *Visitationsprotokoll v.* 1528 in the *Bischöfl. Ordinariatsarchiv in Graz,* copy in *Steir. Landesarchiv in Graz.*

recantation brought him the honor of an episcopal office and syndic of the University of Vienna.[35]

Among the brethren and sisters who were present at Götzenberg in the Tyrol in 1536 was the daughter of a judge. A few years later a "freeman" Martin Legeder of Klausen, together with his family, migrated to Moravia.[36] In 1560 "several freemen of good repute and considerable wealth with much money" migrated to Moravia.[37] In November, 1583, the apothecary Melchior Platzer was beheaded in Vorarlberg after a half year imprisonment, and his body burned.[38]

### 4. *Peasants*

Although in Upper Austria, as Nikoladoni has clearly proved, the peasants were unaffected by and large by the Anabaptist propaganda, the direct opposite is true in the Tyrol. In the latter territory not only did many peasants aid the movement by giving shelter and food to the Anabaptist missionaries, but also numerous converts were won among them. An incontrovertible proof for this is the record in the archives of hundreds of cases of confiscation of the property of those who had fled or were executed, as well as the fact of the agricultural skill of the Hutterites which was recognized by the Diet of Moravia, and was one of the chief factors in their prosperity in Moravia. The nobles preferred to use the brethren as inspectors, managers, supervisors, butlers, and stewards, etc., not only because of their integrity, but above all because of their practical experience and skill. Even though this skill may be in part the result of the requirement that each one who joined the Moravian church should learn and practice some practical activity, nevertheless the recognized ability and skill of the Anabaptists in this field, which was again and again confirmed, would be inexplicable apart from the old peasant tradition which they brought with them, and which the many immigrants from the Tyrol and Switzerland demonstrated.

### 5. *Artisans*

The founders and leaders of the three branches of Anabaptists which were to be found in Moravia after Hubmaier's death and which Hans Hut had already combatted (Hut himself was a possessor of some property, who also operated a book bindery on the side

35. G. Bossert, *Zwei Linzer Reform. Schriftsteller* in *Jahrbuch* XXI. Wien, 1902 and XXIX 1908.

36. Loserth, *Anabaptismus.*

37. Loesche, *Tirolensia,* p. 46.

38. Beck, *op. cit.*

and peddled booklets[39]) were all artisans. They were Gabriel Ascherham, a furrier from Bavaria, Philipp Blauärmel, a weaver, probably from Alsace, and Jakob Hutter, whose branch ultimately absorbed the "Gabrieler" and the "Philipper," and who bears the name of his craft although the chronicles do not report the occupation of his family. In Hutter's Tyrolean home (he came from the Pustertal) artisans were active as missionaries of the movement. For instance, in 1528 a shoemaker's apprentice is mentioned. Hutter of course was the real creator of the "wahren Gemeinschaft" of Christian communism, which has remained a characteristic of this branch of the Anabaptists until the present day. He was the first elder of the group which has been named after him as the Hutterian Brethren, and occupied this position from the year 1533 to his death as a martyr in 1536. During the time that he was active in his home community in the year 1529, a scythe-maker was one of his chief assistants, and another active worker in the movement who converted many of his fellow countrymen was the weaver, Hans Langecker from South Tyrol, a companion of Blaurock. Hutter's successor in the office of elder, his associate in the dangerous missionary activity in the Tyrol, was Hans Amon, an artisan, possibly a cloth-worker from Bavaria. In the region about Brixen there was at this time in addition to other artisans, a shoemaker who was an outstanding preacher.[40] The successor in the eldership of Amon, who died a peaceful death in Moravia in 1542, was Leonhard Lanzenstiel, a rope-maker from Bavaria. Lanzenstiel did much in his high office for the consolidation of the organization of the group, following a dangerous itinerant activity in connection with which he lost his wife who was imprisoned and drowned. He died in Klein-Niemtschitz in Moravia in 1565.[41] His assistant Peter Riedemann, (1542-1556) the author of the *"Rechenschaft"* which was so highly prized by the brotherhood, was a shoemaker from Silesia.[42] Wolf Seiler, no doubt a rope-maker, who died in 1550, was one of the most productive composers of hymns. Kaspar Braitmichel, the chronicler and hymn writer, who died in 1573 in Moravia, was a tailor by trade. The two next successors to Lanzenstiel in the eldership, Peter Walpot (1565-1578) and Hans Kräl (1578-1583), were both artisans. Walpot, a warper from the Tyrol, was the author not only of letters and theological treatises, but also of

39. W. Neuser, *Hans Hut,* Berlin, 1913.
40. H. Ammann, *Die Wiedertäufer i. Michelsburg i. Pustertal,* Brixen, 1896-97.
41. Article by Loserth in *Menn. Lexikon* II. pp. 649 ff.
42. Thoroughly treated in L. Müller, *op. cit.*

a booklet of instruction for school teachers which is almost a classic.[43] Kräl was the elder of the church in the time of exceptional prosperity.[44] Klaus Felbinger, who died as a martyr in 1560 and was the author of several epistles and hymns, was a locksmith by trade. The last five elders of the church in the Moravian period were likewise artisans as custom required. Klaus Breidl of Hesse was a shoemaker. He had proved his ability as a missionary before his appointment, and made a valuable contribution in the development of the organization. He was active until his eighty-second year and died in 1607 at Neumühle an der Thaya, the "bishop's residence." His successor was Sebastian Dietrich, a surgeon. The next elder, Ulrich Jausling from Switzerland, was a copper-smith. After him came the unfortunate Rudolf Hirzl, who fell a victim to the trickery and force of Cardinal Dietrichstein and surrendered the money reserves of the brotherhood, for which reason the church deposed him from his office in 1621. He was a harness-maker. The last elder, under whose leadership the brotherhood migrated to Hungary, after having been driven out of Moravia, Valentin Winter, a Württemberger, was a tailor by trade.[45]

The occupation was so closely identified with the individual that many of the above-named persons never appear in the *Chronicles* bearing their family names, but bearing the names of their occupations by which they were known among the brethren. For instance, Peter Scherer (Walpot), Hans Tuchmacher (Amon), Lienhard Seiler, Michel Seifensieder, etc. As has already been pointed out, not only did the majority of the letter writers, chroniclers, and hymn writers come from the artisan class, but we have also seen that all of the elders of the large Moravian brotherhood came from the same class.

It was these artisans also chiefly who brought the brotherhood in Moravia to such great economic prosperity. The highly developed skills which they brought with them from their German homelands, enabled them to outdistance in a short time the native handicraft which was less skilled. This fact of course also led to considerable hate and calumny against the brethren, inasmuch as they were in fact in greater demand and for that reason favored workers. Handicraft often contributed just as much to the prosperity of many a Hutterian community as well conducted agricultural operations.

43. Beck, *op. cit.*, and Wolkan, *Geschichtbuch.*
44. Dedic, article in *Menn. Lexikon.* II. 555 f.
45. Beck, *op. cit.* and Wolkan, *Geschichtbuch.*

### 6. *Laborers*

The discrimination between artisan and laborer which we make today, was in earlier times not so sharply drawn, neither subjectively or objectively. The term laborer as I use it here will refer primarily to those who are occupied in mining, forestry and similar types of work. These persons, together with such as were employed in farm labor and as associates of artisans without being themselves independent, constitute what is often called, "die kleinen Leute." Many of these possessed a modest cottage and corresponding equipment, as is clear from the records of the numerous inventories of confiscated property which are found particularly in the archives of the Tyrol government. In the Tyrol particularly it was the laborers in the famous mines in Rattenberg and Schwaz who constituted the major portion of the membership of the Anabaptist churches. In practically all of the investigations against the Anabaptists of this region which were undertaken by the government in the years 1527 to 1529 the officials of the mines had to be called in as assistants.[46] For instance in March, 1528 in Rattenberg at one time sixty miners left their work and joined a group that was migrating to Moravia. These "kleinen Leute" were usually more willing than persons from the higher social classes to join the "Gemeinschaft" in which they anticipated the practice of a "righteousness" which would treat all with equal justice. It was not a matter of entering upon a life of enjoyment, but one of renunciation, not a life of satisfying the outward material needs of life, but a life of sacrifice. In courage to face martyrdom and in firmness of conviction these simple men were without a peer in their time. However they never needed to regret their decision so far as material conditions of life were concerned. If they succeeded in actually reaching Moravia they exchanged for their old homeland which would not tolerate them a new one which received them with open arms, for the rich Moravian nobles, who lived in a land that had no surplus of skilled labor, were glad to give the Hutterites employment, in fact preferred that. However, the great majority of the brethren lived in the Hutterian communities, or Bruderhofs. Some of the "Hofs" for example the one in Nikolsburg, are still standing today almost unchanged, and with their many small cottages which they inclose remind us today of the social background of most of their inhabitants.

46. *Kopialbuch Causa Domini* II. u. III at various places, *Reg. Arch.*, Innsbruck.

# STRASBURG, A SWISS BRETHREN CENTER

By John Horsch

In the Reformation period Alsace, with Strasburg as its principal city, was a province of the German Empire. Even before that era nonresistant dissenters were in various periods numerous in this city. In the year 1212 a Waldensian congregation was detected by officers of the law. No less than eighty brethren and sisters were burned at the stake in that year at Strasburg. Conrad Reiser, a Waldensian missionary, suffered martyrdom here by burning at the stake, in the month of January, 1458.

Early in the Reformation period Strasburg became nominally a Protestant city, nevertheless the authorities were slow in abandoning Roman Catholic worship and practice. The preaching of evangelical doctrine was permitted several years before the mass was abolished on February 20, 1529. As we shall note directly, before the inception of the Anabaptist movement, Martin Butzer (Bucer) and Wolfgang Capito, the leading Protestant reformers of the city, took an attitude of indecision and doubt regarding infant baptism. After the year 1525 they changed their views on this point, having been led to see that the baptism of the infants was indispensable for an all-inclusive state church. At the time when the mass was abolished in 1529, these reformers entertained strong hopes that infant baptism would be made obligatory at once by the magistracy. However, this expectation was not realized. The definite organization of the Protestant church of Strasburg with compulsory infant baptism was postponed by the civil authorities to a much later date, namely until the year 1534.

In the meantime Martin Butzer and his associates continued their efforts to persuade the magistracy of Strasburg to organize a church. Had Butzer and his friends proceeded with the introduction of reforms without the sanction of the authorities, they would have been considered as dissenters. The fact deserves notice in this connection that it was keenly and widely realized that the Reformation, in so far as it was state-made and stood for a union of church and state, failed to bring such fruits as had been hoped for. Even among the friends of the Reformation in the magistracy of Strasburg there were those who complained of a growing religious indifference among the population, though there had been Protestant preaching for about a decade. The Anabaptists, on the contrary,

were known to take religion seriously and to emphasize practical piety. Owing to the ecclesiastical disorganization, until the year 1534 the people of Strasburg had full liberty to refuse to have their infants baptized. It is evident then that in this city the soil had been well prepared, as it were, for the reception of the message of the evangelical Anabaptists.

The authorities of Strasburg took a position of comparative tolerance toward the Anabaptists. The famous burgomaster of the city, Jacob Sturm, regarded all persecution with disfavor and was supported in this attitude by a number of influential lay men, among them the knight Eckard zum Trubel. Matthias Zell, one of the leading reformers of the city, also disapproved of the persecution of dissenters. Two other state church ministers, Wolfgang Schultheiss and Anton Engelbrecht, openly defended the principle of full liberty of conscience, while Martin Butzer, on the contrary, did all in his power to prevail upon the civil authorities to refuse toleration to the Anabaptists.

A mandate against the Anabaptists was published by the magistrates on July 17, 1527, forbidding the populace to give shelter and food to Anabaptists, and this mandate was renewed in the autumn of 1530. In 1538 a new decree was issued requiring banishment for all Anabaptists. In case any one of those who were banished would return, he was to be imprisoned for four weeks. An Anabaptist returning a second time would be punished by cutting off of fingers and by being branded on the cheek with a red-hot iron. Any one returning the third time was to be executed by drowning. In point of fact, however, the death sentence was never pronounced upon an Anabaptist in Strasburg. There was in evidence an inclination to let Anabaptists unmolested if they refrained from attending separate meetings and from criticizing the state church. Nowhere outside Moravia, were the Anabaptists accorded such consideration as here. In consequence, many refugees from surrounding regions sought shelter in Strasburg, swelling the numbers of the native Anabaptists.

In the spring of the year 1526 the attention of the authorities of the city was attracted by the presence of many Anabaptists. Michael Sattler, one of the prominent ministers of the Swiss Brethren, was in Strasburg for some time in that year. In the autumn of 1528 Pilgram Marpeck fled from Augsburg to a village near Strasburg, and later moved into the city. The efforts of Martin Butzer to cause Marpeck's banishment were unsuccessful for a considerable period, owing to the fact that he was a man of extraordinary skill as an en-

gineer, and that the city authorities consequently desired to avail themselves of his services. As a minister of the Gospel he found Strasburg a fruitful field. Through Butzer's influence he was finally banished from the city in December, 1531. Other ministers of the Swiss Brethren as well as of other Anabaptist parties also labored in Strasburg.

In the spring of 1529 many Anabaptists were imprisoned in Strasburg, forty-four in the dungeons of the Wilhelm's Tower alone. About one hundred Anabaptists who had been banished from Augsburg fled to Strasburg in the same year. The Anabaptists and their sympathizers became numerically strong in the city. Of this there were various indications. Infant baptism fell more and more into disfavor among the population in general. The printers of the city hesitated to publish books against the Anabaptists, asserting that there was no sale for them; they preferred to issue publications defending the doctrine of the Anabaptists. Hubmaier's masterly defense of faith baptism, *The Christian Baptism of Believers,* was published here as early as 1525, and two books of Pilgram Marpeck were published here later. Martin Butzer and his associates noticed with grave misgivings the spread of Anabaptist principles and the corresponding loss of the influence of the state church. A decadence of the state church type of Christianity was clearly in evidence. Church attendance decreased materially, as well as participation of the population in the communion services. There seemed to be cause to fear that the dissenters would win the day in the city. The final success of the state church party was due to the fact that liberty of conscience was refused and thus Strasburg became one of the many places where the state church owed its final triumph over the Anabaptists to the strong arm of the civil authorities. About the year 1534 the number of Anabaptists in the city was estimated at 2,000.

As already stated, Martin Butzer and Wolfgang Capito, the most prominent preachers of the state church, before the rise of the Anabaptists had expressed serious doubts regarding infant baptism. In 1524 Butzer had published a book in which he made the statement that "in the first Christian congregations only those were baptized and received into the church who themselves had fully surrendered to the Word of Christ." Capito held similar views regarding baptism, even in later years. In him the Anabaptists had for a number of years a warm friend. In letters to his friend, Musculus, Capito expressed the opinion that believers should be permitted to separate from the world, as did the Anabaptists. And

again he wrote to the same person, "Those who under the greatest tyranny profess Anabaptist principles, err without evil intentions, if they do err. For they do not make use of baptism as a means for dividing the church but as a testimony that they believe the Word and are willing to give their lives for their Redeemer." In a letter to Zwingli, Capito spoke of the Anabaptists' praiseworthy sincerity of faith. Again, in 1527, Capito wrote a letter of consolation to a number of imprisoned Anabaptists at Horb in Württemberg, admonishing them to steadfastness.

And not merely in private letters but also in some of his published writings did Wolfgang Capito defend the Anabaptist position. In his *Commentary* to the book of Hosea he disapproved of infant baptism and defended the baptism of believers. He defined the Christian church not as a community of persons who were to be led to accept Christ (such was the state church idea) but as a union of obedient believers in Christ. He insisted that the Christian church consists of believers. Nevertheless he inconsistently retained his office as minister in the state church. After a few years, however, namely toward the end of 1531, Martin Butzer and other prominent churchmen succeeded in persuading Capito to make a thorough change in his views on baptism and the nature of the Christian church. He now accepted a position that was entirely satisfactory from the viewpoint of the state church. Indeed he became a radical opponent of the Anabaptists. In 1535 he asserted that it was the foremost duty of the civil authorities to regulate matters of faith for the population, and denounced the principle of liberty of conscience.

For a long time the appeals of Butzer to use more stringent measures in the suppression of the dissenters were disregarded by the authorities. After the first synod of the state church, held in 1533, however, the Council published a mandate ordering that no doctrine contrary to the Augsburg Confession was to be tolerated. Citizens holding contrary doctrines were to leave the city, with their families, within two weeks. Infant baptism in particular was made obligatory by the strict command that all infants must be baptized within six weeks after birth. Parents neglecting to bring their children for baptism were threatened with banishment. A mandate was published against "the common Anabaptists" (the Swiss Brethren), the Melchiorites (followers of Melchior Hofmann), and all other dissenters, ordering their banishment. Banished Anabaptists who returned to the city were threatened with capital punishment. Many now fled the city, and there was a consequent increase

in the number of Anabaptists in many towns and villages of Alsace, especially in the vicinity of Strasburg. A committee, called *Täufer-Herren* (Commission for Anabaptist matters), was charged with the duty of dealing with and passing sentence on Anabaptists in Strasburg. Nevertheless, as already stated, the city never stained its hands with the blood of those who would not accept the creed prescribed by the state church.

A description of a meeting of the Swiss Brethren was given at Colmar, Alsace, by a woman while under torture. She related that about thirty-six persons assembled at night in a forest near Kestenholz. One, named brother George Bastian, was reading the Scriptures and speaking for three hours. When he was done, they all knelt and prayed for a quarter of an hour for all authorities and for their persecutors. After that, all partook of the common meal for which some had brought food. Then one of them admonished those who were not yet baptized to lead a quiet Christian life. Some had need of clothing and tools, and were supplied. In March of the year 1540 a meeting of the Swiss Brethren in Strasburg was surprised by officers. Thirty-nine persons were arrested, while about the same number made their escape. The most prominent of them were imprisoned for some time. Of two other Anabaptist meetings for worship in or near Strasburg, held in 1545 and 1557, there are detailed reports. In the last mentioned meeting two persons were received into the church by baptism. One of the questions asked the applicants was: "Whether they would, when necessity required it, give all they had to help their brethren, and would let none be in need, if they could help him."

Besides the congregation of the Swiss Brethren there were in Strasburg and vicinity also circles of Melchiorites and of followers of Hans Denck. The last two named parties differed in doctrine and practice from the Swiss Brethren. Both the followers of Melchior Hofmann and of Hans Denck practiced faith baptism only for a short period, and then abandoned it. Soon after 1540 both parties disappeared from the scene in Strasburg, while the Swiss Brethren continued to be as always the strongest Anabaptist party in the city. Strasburg was for centuries the center of activities of the Swiss Brethren in South Germany. As previously stated, scarcely any severer measures of persecution than banishment threatened them here, while elsewhere far greater dangers faced them.

A number of conferences of the Swiss Brethren were held in or near the city of Strasburg. Of some of these conferences the records have been preserved. On August 24, 1555, the Swiss Brethren as-

sembled here to take action regarding a particular doctrinal point, namely the peculiar view of the incarnation of Christ which was defended by the brethren in the Netherlands and northern Germany, but was rejected by the Swiss Brethren.

Another noteworthy conference of the Swiss Brethren held at Strasburg was that of the year 1557. About fifty bishops and ministers of the Brethren of the upper countries (Swiss Brethren) gathered for this conference from Alsace, Switzerland, Baden, Württemberg, and Moravia. Among them was the minister in whose house the conference had been held at which the Schlatten confession was adopted in 1527. The official report of the Strasburg conference of 1557 was given in the form of a letter to the brethren in the lower countries, namely, in the Netherlands and northern Germany. The churches in the lower countries had been directly under the influence of Menno Simons and Dirck Philips, and were the first to be named Mennonites. As stated in the report, the delegates to this conference represented about fifty churches, located from the Eyfelt river in southwestern Germany to Moravia, and a few of these congregations numbered 500 to 600 members.

One of the topics discussed was the avoidance of the excommunicated. This was a live question in the churches of the lower countries, not however in the congregations of the Swiss Brethren. Among the latter the strict avoidance was not practised, but knowledge of the controversy on this point in the lower countries had caused disturbance in some of their congregations. The controversy was deplored by the Brethren assembled at Strasburg. In particular they declared at this conference that the observance of avoidance in the case of married couples when one partner was excluded from the church, indicated an extreme view which was to them unacceptable. The report was in part addressed to "our dear brother Menno and all the ministers and bishops in the Netherlands who serve the churches of the Lord."

Again, a general gathering of the bishops and ministers of the Swiss Brethren from many countries was held at Strasburg in 1592. They had previously been approached by the Socinians (Unitarians) of Poland, through Christoph Osterod, who had expressed the hope that they would consent to a union with them. The reply to Osterod's proposal is contained in a statement issued by this conference, in which the Socinians are addressed as "dear men," not as "dear brethren." The Brethren declared emphatically that the Socinian teaching on the point in question was unscriptural and unacceptable. The representatives of the Brethren said expressly in

the same document that they could not receive the Socinians as brethren in the case of a visit by them.

Other conferences of which records have been preserved were held at Strasburg in 1568 and 1607. A Mennonite congregation existed in this city until well into the last century.

Concerning the persecution of the Anabaptists in Strasburg there is a noteworthy letter extant, written about 1550 by Katharina Zell, the widow of Matthias Zell, who had been a prominent minister in the state church. The letter is addressed to the Protestant preachers of the city, and is in part as follows:

"The poor Anabaptists about whom you are so enraged, and incite the government against them as a hunter sets his dogs on wild pigs and rabbits; they nevertheless zealously confess Christ with us, and thus you persecute Christ in them. Yea many of them have confessed Him notwithstanding exile, imprisonment and execution by fire and water. Do you not realize that we, in doctrine and life, give them cause for separation? The government should punish those that do wrong, but should not use force in matters of faith, as you are advising. Strasburg, the Lord be praised, is yet giving an example of mercy, sympathy and hospitality for the homeless fugitives, and harbors today many a poor Christian professor whom you would desire to be driven out. Such things Matthias Zell never approved. He, on the contrary, desired to gather the scattered sheep. He never consented to persecution, and at a time when the preachers urged the government to exile the Anabaptists he, with a sad heart and great earnestness, said publicly from the pulpit and in the convention of the ministers: 'I call God, heaven and earth to witness at that day that I am innocent of the oppression and banishment of these poor people.' "

# MUTUAL AID AMONG MENNONITES, I

J. Winfield Fretz

*Mennonite Principles as a Preface to the Subject of Mutual Aid*

Before it is possible to appreciate fully any phase of Mennonite culture, it is necessary to understand the essentials of the Mennonite religious, social, and economic views of life. Therefore, the actual treatment of the subject of mutual aid among the Mennonites will be prefaced by a brief discussion of Mennonite principles and their relation to the subject of mutual aid.

The Mennonites are direct descendants of the peaceful Anabaptists and have maintained the principles of this religious group in a general way down to the present time.[1] The Anabaptists held that the true Church was one of believers only, and despairing of bringing the Catholic and larger Protestant bodies to this view, they proceeded to set up an organization to meet their own ideal. The purity of the Church was to be secured by baptism of believers only, and preserved by the exercise of strict discipline. It will be seen at once that these predecessors of the Mennonites did not depend on any outside agency for help, either to build their own organization, or to maintain discipline within their group. They were confident that this could be done by mutual agreement among themselves. It is also to be noticed that any discipline to be administered was not by a single officer within the Church, nor by a civil officer without, but by the democratic action of the entire congregation. The matter of discipline, or retaining loyalty to group ideals, was a mutual duty of every member.

The Anabaptists strove to reproduce as nearly as possible the life of the early Christian Church and among themselves they tried to imitate the life of Christ.[2] The Mennonites, being direct descendants of the Anabaptists, tried to do the same. Among the most distinctive principles was the insistence of the right of the individual to interpret the Scriptures for himself without the aid of priest or preacher. The chief qualification for correct interpretation of the Bible was illumination of the Holy Spirit. This principle is generally accepted today but in the sixteenth century it was so radi-

1. C. Henry Smith, *Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania,* Norristown, Pa. 1929, pp. 11-74.

2. W. J. M'Glothin, "Anabaptists," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* Vol. I (1908), ed. James Hastings, p. 410.

cal a thought that it caused the Mennonites untold persecution and hatred. The importance of this principle for our consideration in connection with the study of mutual aid is very great. This emphasis on individual freedom by illumination of the Holy Spirit manifested itself in the daily life of the believers in that they were not bound by law but by the spirit. It is this freedom from legalism and formal doctrine and a dependence upon individual conscience that enabled them to live out their convictions despite all persecutions, ridicule, and scorn heaped upon them by their opponents.

It is likewise this freedom of conscience that gave them the vision and confidence to try to establish a "Kingdom of Heaven" on earth in their own communities. It was not an attempt to build a kingdom on a universal scale. It was simply a kingdom of voluntary believers beginning with themselves and adding others who wished to join their group. It was in such an atmosphere of freedom and Christian brotherliness that mutual aid could flourish. Mutual aid had its roots intertwined with the very roots of Mennonite religious principles.

Another distinctive principle of the Mennonites was the belief in the complete separation of the church from dependence upon the state for any kind of support, as well as rejection of the authority of the state to contradict the individual conscience. The conscience to them was the voice of God. In applying this principle they also manifested a willingness to provide the necessities of life for all within their group without the help of the State. Through a mutual arrangement of duties and responsibilities they felt able to live without outside help.

The Mennonites refused to bear arms or hold any civil office. This principle too, has significance for the study of mutual aid. There was a reason for the Mennonite willingness to suffer persecution and death for this principle. It was the reverence and the respect that they held for human life. To accept either the responsibility of bearing arms or of holding civil office might mean the necessity of violating this sacred belief. In war, by killing and wounding, in civil office by having to inflict capital punishment, they committed sacrilege. To seek revenge, they held, is to act contrary to the teaching of Jesus, and to kill or wound a human being without revenge is a still more deadly sin. Love was to be the guiding principle and the driving force behind every Christian's actions, and it was very clear that any expression of force was contrary to the principle of love.

Behind all of these negatory expressions was a strong, positive

implication, even though it was seldom clearly stated. It was the firm conviction in the possibility of a way of life based on mutual love and respect for fellow believers. The Mennonites believed that an organization of Christians on a community basis could be established where love and brotherhood could be expressed in daily life. Force and violence were outlawed as methods of accomplishing ends. They fully believed that a true follower of Christ would so conduct himself as to place the welfare of others before his own. This was the basis of Jesus' teaching, but history reveals that not all His professed followers have accomplished His ideal. It is worthy of notice that the Mennonites did set for themselves this laudable aim.

Another Mennonite principle of significance is that of emphasis on the simple life. This principle was stressed in matters of clothing, food, furnishings and in all outward appearances. With this doctrine of simplicity were stressed the virtues of industriousness and thriftiness. Frugality and industry generally produce prosperity, at least in a material sense. It was so with the Mennonites, but they aimed at a reasonable prosperity for the group rather than for a few within the group. A loyalty to a common faith leveled all class distinction, and brought condemnation upon anyone who tried to exploit another. Likewise, emphasis on simplicity tended to counteract any feeling of sophistication and superiority. With few outward possessions to display individuality, the tendency to covet was reduced to a minimum. With a minimum of jealousy, selfishness, and sophistication, is possible a maximum of mutual aid and brotherly helpfulness.

While many of the Mennonites were strongly inclined to a voluntary and benevolent communism in the acquisition and administration of property in imitation of the primitive Christian church at Jerusalem, the majority of them did not favor communism in its complete form. They strenuously maintained, however, that all property belonged primarily to the Lord, and must be used freely to minister to the needy. They conceived themselves to be in the position of stewards, under solemn obligation to administer the Lord's money for the highest good of mankind.[3]

The typical attitude of those Anabaptists who held a semi-communistic position with regard to property is well expressed by Balthasar Hubmaier, one of the most learned of the early Anabaptist leaders.

I have always, and in every way, taught that community of property means that one man should have compassion on another; that he

3. M'Glothin, *loc. cit.*

should feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, and clothe the naked; for in truth, we are not masters of our possessions, but stewards or dispensers only. Certainly none could think that we ought to take from another what belongs to him, and make it common property, but rather give the cloak in addition to the coat.[4]

Hubmaier does not express completely the ideals of those who held a similar view with regard to community organization. In the practical application of the principles above expressed, a more uniform type of life or a more communistic arrangement resulted in certain groups than would be implied by Hubmaier's statement.

A further evidence of the high regard of the Mennonites for each other's welfare was their opposition to the lending of money on interest. They refused to accept interest themselves and paid it unwillingly to others. Money, they believed, should be lent for the benefit of the borrower rather than the lender. Proper fraternal relations forbade the exploitation of the needs of a brother; besides the practice was contrary to the teachings of Scripture: "You must not exact interest on loan to a fellow-countryman of yours, interest on money, food, or anything else that might be exacted as interest."[5] Again they read in the sacred Word that the Christian "does not put out his money on interest, nor take a bribe against the innocent."[6]

The principles of the Mennonites, like those of the Anabaptists, are still today, in theory if not in practice, based on the literal interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount. An attempt to live out these teachings and imitate the Apostolic community can hardly result in anything else than communism, or semi-communism, at least. And in Christian communism there is both opportunity and need for mutual aid to be expressed in every-day life. It is in the light of these religious principles of separation of Church and State, of non-participation in civil and military life, of an emphasis on the simple life, of an attempt to build a community of "believers," and other less important principles that we shall not take time here to mention, that the Mennonites must be understood before their culture and life can be fully appreciated. With these principles in mind we shall proceed to a more detailed study of mutual aid among the Mennonites.

From even this superficial examination of the Mennonite principles, it is evident that mutual aid was practiced by them from the

4. Karl Kautsky, *Communism in Central Europe in the Time of the Reformation*, London, 1897, p. 192. This is a very exhaustive study of communism among the Anabaptists.

5. Deuteronomy 23:19.

6. Psalms 15:5.

time Mennonites were conscious of themselves as a distinct group. Christian brotherhood and an expression of mutual aid are inseparable. The mutual aid expressed by the Mennonites is then first of all rooted in their religious principles. A second source of origin may be found in the existing cultural patterns of the time. It will be remembered that in medieval times, forms of mutual aid were expressed in the village communities. That the Mennonites absorbed at least some of the existing cultural patterns from time to time can hardly be denied. The Mennonites have, throughout their history, lived in rather compact communities and when they migrated they did so in large numbers rather than by individual families. This in itself is an evidence of the loyalty to, and dependence upon, one another. We must then conclude that mutual aid is rooted in the very principle of the Church, and it is quite natural that mutual aid practices should be found wherever Mennonites are found.

### *An Example of Mutual Aid Among the Mennonites— The Hutterian Brethren*

One example of mutual aid on a community basis that has existed among one branch of the Mennonites for four hundred years is that of the Hutterites. This group of religious communists has retained the same doctrines and practices for four centuries with hardly a change either in principle or in social behavior.[6a] They are the oldest religious communistic society in the world, going back to the early sixteenth century.[7] Few other social groups, if any, have been able to resist four centuries of civilization with all its pressure and techniques to make for conformity as well as the Hutterites have. The descriptions of their communities in the early sixteenth century in Moravia and those of their settlements in South Dakota today are almost identical. There seems to be little change either in principle or in practice and outlook.

This experiment in communism which was begun in Moravia, by Jacob Hutter, is by no means typical of all Mennonite communities, but it is one illustration of how the Anabaptist religious principles were literally interpreted and lived out in actual experience. These Hutterites furnish an interesting opportunity to study a peculiar Mennonite social organization. Each unit or community of the group is called a *Bruderhof,* and is similar to other units but completely independent from all others as far as government is concerned. From fifteen to twenty families make up a unit. In South

6a. John Horsch, *The Hutterian Brethren,* 1528-1931, Goshen, Indiana, 1931.

7. C. Henry Smith, *Coming of the Russian Mennonites,* Berne, Indiana, 1927, p. 160 ff.

Dakota, the Wolf Creek colony consisted of twenty-four families and owned about six thousand acres of land. There is positively no ownership of property by individuals. All the land, buildings, equipment, tools, furnishings and even the clothing, are said to be owned by the community or the *Bruderhof*. Only the "boss" or the manager handles any money. All others in the *Bruderhof* have their assigned work to do such as housework, milling, baking, gardening, shoe-making, carpentering and the like. In return, for this work, they are provided with the necessary food, clothing, medical care, shelter and other needs of life. Originally the organization was based on the apostolic community and an attempt to live according to the Sermon on the Mount. The original wealth constituted the sum of all the private possessions of the members of the colony which were contributed at the time of joining. The ideal of the organization is to share each other's burdens in daily life and express a brotherly attitude toward one another; all are to enjoy pleasures and work together for the common good. It is similar to a large family where the fundamentals of the home are all commonly owned and used. The group elects an elder as the religious head of the *Bruderhof* but all look to God as the heavenly Father.[8]

This earth is considered only a temporary home and for that reason everything in this life is done with an eye toward the great life hereafter. Each individual plays an important part in the life of the group; he receives no pay in money but for his work he receives the necessities of life, and the sum of all the work in the colony constitutes a whole unit. The entire life of the Hutterites is based on mutual aid, and is expressed in mutual organization as a way of life. Through it mutual protection is provided, all members work together to provide sufficient food and clothing, through mutual efforts adequate shelter is provided, enough cash is earned to buy whatever necessities cannot be produced and these are few because life is simple. Through mutual help the members enjoy fellowship together, promote common ideals, express Christian brotherhood, and in short help all to help themselves. It must also be stated that the Hutterites are not a selfish group interested only in themselves at the cost of those outside their own group. As evidence of this statement we cite the fact that in 1926 six churches with an average membership of 117, contributed $3,215.00 to outside charity. This is a contribution of $27.48 per member.[9] When one considers their

8. Jacob M. Hofer, *Hutterite Communism,* unpublished M. A. dissertation, Divinity School, University of Chicago, 1928.

9. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Religious Bodies,* 1926: *Mennonite Bodies,* Washington, Government Printing Office, 1928.

extreme frugality in buying extras or luxuries for themselves, one might suppose the Hutterites would hesitate to contribute freely to others, especially to causes outside their own jurisdiction. This is, however, not the case. The absence of private ownership of goods shifts the interest of the self to that of the group, and this in turn necessitates a working together of individuals within the group to promote the common welfare.[10]

Had Communism among the Hutterites been purely a social or an economic theory, it would have perished long ago as did hundreds of similar experiments. The Hutterite brotherhood is, however, based on Scriptural authority. For all their unconventional procedures today the Hutterites can quote Scripture passages in support of their conduct. The sharing of temporal and spiritual gifts has a religious sanction; it is a church doctrine as essential as any other. It is this fact that, in a large measure, explains the longevity and continued vitality of this social organization.

Enough has been said to make it abundantly clear that the social arrangement of the Hutterites is a field where mutual aid is a necessary part of the success of the organization. It is only through the constant practice of it throughout the centuries that the experiment has been able to exist. Without the continued practice of mutual aid in daily life, the Hutterite *Bruderhof* would fail in a very short time. Here then we have observed an example of mutual aid among some Mennonites.

### *A Second Mennonite Experiment in Co-operation— The Plockhoy Colony*

More than a century after Jacob Hutter instituted his plan of communism, the Mennonites were to witness another social experiment. This one was fated to be very short-lived. In 1663 Pieter Plockhoy, a liberal-minded Dutch communist of Mennonite ancestry, after a number of unsuccessful attempts to interest others in his scheme, finally received the promise of the city of Amsterdam to come to his aid. He proposed to establish a semi-communistic colony, at first planning it somewhere in England or in Ireland but finally buying land along the Delaware Bay, at that time a part of New Netherlands. He wished to establish a colony for twenty-five Mennonite families, composed chiefly of poor people.

According to a pamphlet written by Plockhoy in 1662 his experiment was to be one of co-operation, but only partly a communistic

10. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 160 ff.

one.[11] Provisions were made for a large colony. All the future settlers were to live in common houses accommodating from thirty to forty people, but property was not to be held in common except for the first three years, during which time everyone was to work for the common good, and live from a common storehouse. Education was to be free to all and religious toleration was assured. There was to be but one house of worship maintained by voluntary support of the people. Slavery was prohibited and those who had conscientious objections to bearing arms were to pay a special tax for the support of those who entered military service. Information concerning the history of this experiment is scant. However, there are records which reveal at least one settlement of forty-one people with their baggage and farm implements. Later during the Dutch-English War all the colonies along the Delaware were plundered and that of Plockhoy's was laid waste "to a very nail." There is also record of Plockhoy and his wife coming to Philadelphia thirty years later. He was at that time blind and penniless and was provided for at public expense. The history of the colony is not our main consideration at this point. The important thing is the aim with which Plockhoy started out, namely, that of building a co-operative commonwealth. It is interesting to notice what merits he placed on co-operation as a way of improving economic conditions. In this early plan he stressed the importance of working together, eating together and securing food and clothing from a common storehouse. The implication is clear: he evidently believed that these poor families, by living and working together, could each improve his own condition.

It is not impossible that Plockhoy was acquainted with the Hutterites, and perhaps other communistic experiments of the time. If he was, he evidently did not believe in the extreme form of communism that the Hutterites practiced. He allowed for more personal freedom, and from the beginning made allowance for personal ownership of property. He must have been fairly close to the Mennonites and their principles because of his provision for conscientious objection to military service, opposition to slavery, and religious toleration. The significant thing about this experiment is the hope of Plockhoy and his settlers to improve their earthly lot through mutual aid. While individually they were poor, through united efforts they might at least become self-respecting and moderately able to provide for their wants. This attempt to

11. C. Henry Smith, *Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania,* Norristown, Pa., 1929, pp. 27-28.

solve life problems through group effort has been characteristic of Mennonites throughout their history. This may seem like a paradoxical statement in view of the fact that so much emphasis has been placed upon individual freedom in religious matters and the fact that there are many divisions within the Mennonite Church itself. However, contrary to this outward appearance, there was always extensive practice of mutual helpfulness and consideration for each other within the group. Constantly throughout their history the Mennonites have practiced mutual aid in one form or another; it is one of the causes that accounts for their existence as a separate group; if they were not loyal and helpful to each other it is difficult to see how they could retain their group solidarity and social institutions from generation to generation. This fact will become clearer as we continue to observe the numerous examples of mutual aid as it has been, and still is being, practiced among the Mennonites.

### *Mutual Aid Among the Russian Mennonites*

The two examples of mutual aid that have been cited so far were representative of a very small percentage of the entire Mennonite population. A third example is characteristic of the social organization and background of fully fifty per cent of all Mennonites in America. The majority of the mutual aid organizations among the American Mennonites are located in areas west of the Mississippi River. Practically all of these people are descendants of immigrants from Russia, or immigrants themselves within the last sixty-five years. It seems best to present in this illustration a representative picture of the life and organization of a Mennonite community in Russia as it existed before the wholesale migrations of Mennonites to America, and before the series of revolutions that finally resulted in the present form of the Soviet government.

The Mennonite settlements in Russia (1788-1914) furnish an interesting example of the course Mennonitism will take where it is free to apply its principles, economic and social as well as political, to every-day life. For the first time in their history the Mennonites were, not only permitted, but strongly encouraged, in the land of the most arbitrary monarch of Europe, to expand their settlements, to practice their religious convictions openly and freely, to develop and master their arts and, in short, to set up with the assurance of complete freedom from interference by the State, the type of community they wished to have. This was a glorious opportunity for the Mennonites to give full expression to all their religious convic-

tions. It was possible here not only to have freedom of speech, but the right to develop economic and social institutions that were in keeping with their religious convictions. Catherine the Great was so eager to secure industrious colonists to develop the steppes of South Russia that she offered them privileges far above those granted to her own Russian subjects. The Mennonites were given complete local autonomy in such matters as local government, education, and religion, in a form which almost amounted to a virtual state within a state.[12]

The Mennonites grouped themselves into small farm villages of from twenty to thirty families each. Their manner of farming was typical of the European system. Each family was entitled to sixty-five dessiatines (175 acres). The land was divided into long, narrow strips so distributed that all would share equally the good and the bad land wherever there was difference in its fertility. Each village had a common pasture ground and each family had several acres immediately adjoining the home for gardening purposes. In the Volga region the titles to property rested in the village; in South Russia it rested in the head of the family. The Mennonites were primarily farmers; only in later years did they enter the industrial and commercial field. Dr. C. Henry Smith gives a good brief description of some mutual aid activities in one village community:

> While these colonies were not communistic in their organization, yet the villages frequently undertook municipal enterprises for the common good. Some villages had a common granary stored with grain for the lean years and for the benefit of the poor. Occasionally also they held tracts of land for later distribution as the population grew. In 1820 the municipal sheep flock of the old colony (Chortitz) consisted of 1000 Merinos, while the income from the municipal ferry across the Dnieper was from two to three thousand rubles annually. The municipal distillery also netted a substantial profit for the common treasury that year.[13]

J. J. Hildebrand, until recently a life long resident in one of these villages, mentions at least fifteen mutual aid activities that were common to many of the villages.[14] Among these, education was one of the most important. In addition to the usual task of teaching the fundamentals of reading and writing, an attempt was made to preserve and promote the culture of the Mennonites. They wanted to preserve their heritage in its purity for the future society. In the early years of the nineteenth century provisions were made for adult

12. Smith, *Coming of the Russian Mennonites, loc. cit.*
13. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
14. J. J. Hildebrand, personal letter, April 22, 1938.

education as well as education for children. Evening classes were established for those who were unable to attend during the day. Reading circles were introduced for those who wished to improve their education. Among other studies, mission subjects were introduced into the curriculum. Even organizations were formed among mothers and daughters for the purpose of promoting wise guidance and proper care of children out of school hours. Special stress was put on teaching of games, songs, and stories that created a love for the folklore of the Mennonites. In some respects this organization resembles the modern parent-teacher association in the United States.

Agricultural methods were greatly improved through the voluntary organization of the men in the Molotchna colony. The aim of this organization was to develop scientific agriculture through study and experiment. The success of these efforts benefited the immediate community; they could be handed on to the younger men, and to the Jewish, Russian, and Tartar colonies in neighboring communities. The efforts of this organization were so successful that it attracted the attention of Russian government officials and occasioned visits from both Alexander I and Alexander II.[15] Similar societies were later formed in other colonies. Among the results accomplished through these mutual efforts were the improvement of fruit trees and nursery stock, the development of bee culture, the advancement of animal husbandry, and the promotion of scientific methods of agriculture. What was originally a study group and an experimental association soon developed into a permanent agricultural institution. This school enabled young men from all the Russian Mennonite settlements to come and learn the latest improvements, and take them back to their own communities to thus enrich the life of the people.

During the early days in Russia the villages had no banks for their money. This is not difficult to understand when we remember that in a rural community of the eighteenth century money played only a very small part in the life of a people. What little cash people had was kept at home. One of the older immigrants who remembers life in those Russian villages remarked that it was much easier to help someone else when the money was kept within constant reach.[16] He also remembers that anyone who was worth about five thousand dollars was considered very well-to-do.

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15. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

16. I. I. Bargen, personal interview. Mr. Bargen came to Mountain Lake, Minn., from Russia as a young man of twenty. He has taught school for over twenty-five years and has been postmaster at Mountain Lake for thirty-two years.

In later years, banks of mutual credit were established but preceding them was the *Waisenamt,* a very old institution, primarily limited to the administration of funds of orphans. The mutual credit banks could, and in fact did, accept deposits from any person and transacted all legal commercial business, lending money not only for agricultural purposes but for promotion of manufacturing and trade as well. These banks were based on membership, and money was lent to members only. Those eligible for membership were people of sound moral character and of good financial standing, at least ten times the amount of credit required. These banks, however, accepted deposits from non-members.[17] The *Waisenamt* is really most characteristic of the village community with which we are primarily concerned. The credit banks are simply mentioned here to show that they developed later to supply the need of a banking institution. The *Waisenamt* was in fact a trust organization formed to assist minors who were orphaned. The money could be invested, saved, or distributed according to the best interests of the parties concerned. Evidence that the *Waisenamt* satisfactorily served a need is the fact that it is still in existence in a number of communities, especially in Canada.

Another interesting illustration of mutual aid among the Russian Mennonite villages was the practice of assisting a widow at the death of her husband. Immediately after her husband's death the widow would name two "good men" to take charge of her affairs. This was not compulsory, but it was generally done. The widow usually chose the closest friends of her husband. They considered it both an honor and a religious duty to serve in such a capacity. All service was rendered free even if it took many days with teams of horses to perform necessary work.[18]

In this way the widow was guarded against possible exploitation. Problems with regard to children, finances or even re-marriage were all first discussed by the widow and her advisers before action was taken. This was an effective way of helping a member who had sustained misfortune; it offered both an opportunity for the friends of the deceased to show their appreciation for his friendship, and at the same time it was a way of relieving the bereaved widow from undue worry and fear of exploitation. Moreover, there were no lawyers' fees to be extracted from whatever financial balance the husband may have left. It was an expression of mutual aid of the simplest yet most genuine sort.

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17. J. J. Hildebrand, personal letter, April 1, 1938.
18. I. I. Bargen, personal interview.

To improve their economic condition and the quality of their livestock, a mutual ownership of stock was practiced to a limited degree. A high grade stallion, bull, ram, or other male animal might be purchased by the community and thus made available to each farmer to improve his herd. During the winter months when these commonly owned animals could not be fed in the common pasture, they would be taken around from one farmer to another for several weeks at a time, thus distributing the cost of feeding and caring for them. In time these efforts resulted in a high calibre of cattle and other livestock for the entire community. The reputation of the Mennonites for raising high grade stock spread far and wide and in this way representatives from Jewish, Russian, and other German communities came to the Mennonites for advice on how to improve their own herds as well as to buy stock from them.

A further evidence of the way mutual aid pervaded the spirit of these villages was the community land fund for the purchase of new lands for younger generations.

When a new area was opened up for settlement any Mennonite married couple having no other farming land, was entitled to one farm and a lot in the new settlement. Parents from both sides usually supplied the young couple with means sufficient to equip the new farm. If they were unable to do so, the couple was given a start at the expense of the community through the municipal funds, repayable or not repayable, as in each case was considered most advisable. In this way young people were given a definite opportunity to begin life on their own. It likewise gave them a sense of importance or a status in the community. J. J. Hildebrand explains it thus:

> Now, if the children and their children's children were left to individually provide for themselves as best every one could, they, having no means of their own to start anywhere, would drift singly, or at best in insignificant little groups, into all directions of the wide world and finding no useful application of their bodily strength, sink there into lamentable wretchedness and misery, and perhaps in despair fall into the underground world. Driven by dire want, they would join anything for a subsistence. They would lose all their church connections and their entire rooting in Mennonitism and whereas their fathers and grandfathers would sit in churches and worship, these most likely would be in moral sloughs; if left to themselves, their proletarization would be almost certain, but by way of mutual aid activities the situation could be met honorably and the young people would get a chance to become respectable citizens.[19]

As the land in the new communities was paid for by the settlers, the money was again put into a fund for the future purchase of

19. Letter from J. J. Hildebrand.

another land settlement. In this way generation after generation could be provided for. Following this method, the Mennonites expanded within the course of a century from a poor immigrant group of 8,000 to a flourishing population of 45,000 generally prosperous farmers and land owners.

In the earliest communities medical care and hospitalization were practically unknown. Occasionally there were doctors who had studied the fundamentals of medicine in Germany. Sixty years ago in the Molotchna colony of some sixty villages there was only one doctor who had some training in Danzig, Germany. In addition to this man they had the services of another person who was called a doctor. However, he did not prescribe any medicine but set bones and adjusted muscles. He had developed this skill through practice and the fundamentals of it were learned from dissecting hogs. Women practiced midwifery. One woman assisted in the delivery of 13,000 babies during the course of her life. She began at the age of sixteen assisting her father who was a doctor. Every one of these deliveries was listed in her day-book. An interesting observation in connection with this practice is the lack of financial consideration. There was no particular charge for the service of midwives. The women who aided a record number of children into this life sometimes delivered as high as ten and twelve without receiving a thing in return. Often there were as high as four deliveries in a single day. One way in which the community showed appreciation to these women for this free service was by exempting them from all taxes.[20]

Doctors would also be farmers, just as carpenters and shoemakers operated a farm in addition to their special trades. The mortality rate of babies was very high. In later years hospitals, doctors, and nurses were provided on the community or mutual aid basis in the same way that most of the other public services were provided.

Another instance of mutual aid among the Mennonites was the fire insurance plan which had been brought along from West Prussia late in the eighteenth century. Each member had his property valued as he saw fit. No premiums were paid. The officers in the associations held their offices without pay; they were honorary positions. After the destruction of a property by fire or storm the secretary's book was consulted to find out for how much the property had been insured. Each member then paid according to the amount of insurance against his own property. If one man had his

20. Statement by I. I. Bargen, personal interview.

property insured for 10,000 rubles and another had his insured for 5,000, the former would be assessed twice as much as the latter to pay for the damages done to the member who had suffered loss. The aim of this plan was to levy the assessment in proportion to the ability to pay. If one man felt that his property should be insured for a good deal more than that of his neighbor, and would expect others to pay him in case of loss, it was only natural that he should be expected to pay more to help some one else who was suffering loss. The clearing of the debris, the hauling of brick and stone and other building material was not included in this insurance money. That was done jointly by the whole village free of charge. Likewise the heavy work, such as setting up the frame of the building, was done free of charge to the individual suffering loss. It will be seen that the actual outlay of money was for the building material alone. All the labor and service was provided mutually and without cost. Furthermore, the money that had to be paid was assessed very nearly in proportion to the ability to pay. This is an excellent example of a mutual sharing of an unavoidable hardship.[21]

One of the universal practices of the Mennonites has always been to provide for their own aged and poor. In Russia, among the Mennonites, this was done in an admirable way, admirable in the sense that it did not tend to degrade the recipients to the point of being outcasts or of losing complete self respect. The poor were given an opportunity to contribute something of value in return for the charity they received. It was the practice for each village to have a common storehouse to which each farmer contributed in times of prosperity to provide against lean years. Usually at the end of the village was a brick building with a fine, tiled roof, perfectly fireproof. Its size depended upon the village. In time of good crops farmers were compelled to bring in a certain quantity of grain for the common storehouse, perhaps a sack of wheat, a sack of rye, and a half sack of barley. This not only served as a source of supply for the dependent poor, but it served as an emergency source for every member of the community should he be for one reason or another completely denied a crop during a given year. Concerning the care of the poor, Dr. Peter Epp says:

> Every village took care of its own poor. It must be said though that there were seldom more than two or three poor families. At the end of the village several houses were built with quarters for the poor. The houses had a plot of ground for vegetables and a little orchard. Fodder for the domestic animals was brought to them by the village as well

21. Letter from Dr. Peter Epp, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

as fuel, provisions, and clothing. In short, the poor lived often better than a not well-to-do villager. The pasture of the village was kept jointly and often the man of one of these poor families was the village herdsman, while another would be engaged as night watchman.[22]

It is needless to point out further that all these provisions for the poor were on the basis of mutual aid. All shared in the responsibility of village problems.

The list of mutual aid activities in the Russian Mennonite colonies is a long one. Mutual aid was carried on in both organized and unorganized forms, and the practice of rendering assistance to one another was so deeply rooted in the customs and habits of daily life that it is difficult to find a single, public activity which was not carried on in a most brotherly spirit. Even activities which could not very well be organized on a permanent basis were conducted in the same spirit of mutual helpfulness. One illustration of this is the method in which a certain village used to market its grain in the city of Berdiansk. This city was located on the Sea of Azov, a distance of about eighty miles from the village of Alexanderwohl to which we are referring. Mr. I. I. Bargen paints this picture:

> The men of the village would band together and form a caravan to take their grain to market. The caravan would leave the village about four o'clock in the morning and get to Berdiansk about noon of the following day. It was customary to spend one day in the city before returning to our village. The trip usually took about four days; it all depended on the condition of the roads which were muddy in the spring and in the summer sometimes got so dusty that the dust was almost knee-deep. The purpose of the caravan was not so much for protection as it was for sociability. It was a further expression of the feeling of neighborliness and of consideration for one another. One of the highlights of a young man's life was to make the trip for the first time. It was a time of great excitement for all, but especially for the boys; it was kind of a festive occasion. It was not uncommon, and I remember well, seeing the men with a piece of sausage in one hand and a large piece of black rye bread in the other, pointing out some big building or sight that amazed the provincial Mennonite villager from the distant hinterland.[23]

Funerals and weddings were likewise community affairs. Funerals were usually attended by invitation while weddings were attended by all people in the village who cared to attend. In the summer time the large barn was cleared, chairs were gathered from the whole village and extensive preparations were made for the occasion. The food for the feast was brought together by various guests

22. Letter from Dr. Peter Epp.
23. Statement by I. I. Bargen, personal interview.

from the immediate and outlying villages, especially such provisions as milk, cream, coffee, flour, eggs, and butter. It was the custom for the host to furnish the meat. He butchered a calf, a sheep, a hog or sometimes supplied half of a beef. This custom was a very honored one and where Mennonites live in compact communities, this practice is still observed. In the older times the time for preparation, celebration and clearing up seldom extends more than a single day or two. The funerals were always held in the homes, never in the churches. While the spirit was not as gay as that of the wedding, the feast and the fellowship were just as thoroughly enjoyed.

Another occasion for community fellowship in the Russian Mennonite settlements was the periodic music festival. The Mennonites are fond of both good music and good fellowship, and since the social opportunities were pretty largely limited to such irregular occasions as funerals and weddings, these music festivals brought together friends and relatives from villages in outlying settlements. It provided another cause for a community gathering where social intercourse and companionship could be enjoyed. By way of summarizing the mutual aid activities in the Russian Mennonite communities it will be sufficient merely to enumerate the comprehensive list given by one who for years was a member of a Russian Mennonite community. Mutual aid was practised in school matters, in the forestry service which served as a substitute for military training in later years following the removal of special privileges, in affairs concerning the autonomous civil government, in matters of mutual fire insurance and voluntary fire brigades, in the purchase of good breeding stock, in furnishing medical help and equipment in hospitals, in old folks' homes and orphanages, in affairs of inheritance and succession legacies, in the *Waisenamt,* in purchase of new settlement areas, in organization of mutual credit banks, in consumers' co-operative stores, in horticultural, agricultural, and educational associations, in choral societies and festivals.[24]

The freedom which Catherine the Great and her successors granted the Mennonites to develop their culture in the way they thought best, resulted in the turning of vast treeless steppes in Southern Russia into productive farmlands and prosperous villages. The population that grew to 45,000 in the first century and more than doubled in the second century, was peaceful, law abiding, thrifty and progressive. It is interesting to observe that given this complete independence, the Mennonites developed such a thriving

24. Letter from J. J. Hildebrand, April 22, 1938.

economy built entirely around and on the idea of mutual aid. Mutual aid was practiced not only in the economic, social and political life, but it pervaded almost every activity of life. The ideals and principles of working together for the common welfare of all became the accepted way of doing things. To carry on activities in a selfish, extremely individualistic basis with no thought of the effect it would have on others would have been considered one of the grossest of sins. It would have branded an individual as unchristian and thus he would have been avoided by his fellow men. This would have been the severest punishment for anyone in a small village where fellowship and companionship were the very basis of happiness. The eyes in which men viewed each other pretty largely constituted their status in the community. It is likewise a significant fact that this extensive practice of mutual aid was not discontinued when prosperity blessed a community. The tendency was rather to increase the mutual services. The practices of mutual aid can thus not be said to be desirable or practical only in times of grave necessity or in times of struggle for existence.

It should be said that not all was harmonious and peaceful, nor was everyone without financial worries in these communities. The settlements were not paradises on earth despite their many praiseworthy features. There were economic problems, as is illustrated by the development of the landless class due to the population pressure after the middle of the nineteenth century. The surplus land had all been divided and occupied. The original agreement had provided that no full estate of sixty-five dessiatines could be divided upon the death of the owner. Naturally only one person could inherit the estate and this in time created a problem for the rest of the sons and daughters who no longer could settle on the undivided land in the settlement as had previously been the case. This in time produced a landless class. Solution was sought in the purchase of daughter colonies as an outlet for surplus population. However, these problems were not all smoothly solved. To make matters more complicated, the landless had no voice in finding a remedy for this situation. Only those who held land had a voice in the local assemblies where all land as well as other policies were determined. Too often the landowners used their monopoly to their own advantage.[25] It is however not our interest to discuss particular problems but simply to indicate that there were intense problems. There were likewise religious controversies and personal jealousies; there was occasional dishonesty, intemperance and lawlessness. On the

25. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 34ff.

whole, however, these Mennonite villages were peaceful, law-abiding, and harmonious as well as economically prosperous when compared with some of the neighboring communities of both Russian and foreign nationalities. It is important to notice that the anti-social forces were very definitely under control. In these communities there was common agreement as to what constituted right and wrong. The *mores* were clearly defined. Through face to face relationships the community had primary control of social conduct. Under this freedom granted by the Russian Government to the Mennonites for the greater part of a century, they developed a community which was governed by a commonly accepted ethic, the center of which was the principle of mutual aid. The windows through which these Mennonites looked at their social organizations and obligations were those of the New Testament. From the New Testament they formulated their *ends* and by it they determined their *means*.

In a certain sense theirs was an attempt to build a "holy community," a society of believers. Because of their freedom from outside interference, their homogeneity of population, their separation from the rest of society because of living in small, compact communities, the Russian Mennonites were able to hold uniform ideals and strict group discipline. Under these conditions it is possible, even natural, that mutual aid should develop and find expression in so many organized and unorganized forms throughout every sphere of life. It will be interesting to notice in the study of mutual aid activities among the descendants of these Russian Mennonites to what extent the migrants carried their culture to the new lands.

### *Mutual Aid in Time of Migrations*

Before leaving the example of mutual aid practices among Mennonites in Russia during the past to take up the mutual aid customs among the Mennonites in America at present, it will be of interest to notice the extensive manifestation of mutual aid during the time of large scale migration from one area of the world to that of another. It is especially significant to remember that this mutual aid was performed by one group of people for another on the basis of a common faith, not because of personal acquaintance or inter-relation of one group with another.

The Mennonites left Russia because many of their special privileges were either threatened or entirely taken away. They migrated by entire villages, or sometimes several villages migrated at the same time, so that in a single year over twelve hundred families

entered various eastern ports. This wholesale migration meant that there would be many problems such as financing the passage, buying and settling on new lands, providing machinery and buildings and other problems accompanying migrations. An appeal was made for help to the Mennonite brethren who had already settled in America for a time and were well established. It should be remembered that while many of the Russian Mennonites were fairly prosperous, they were not all so, and even if they had been prosperous in Russia it did not mean prosperity now because those who were owners of property had to take tremendously heavy losses when they sold their properties. As an illustration of the way people were compelled to sell their homes for a loss because of this wholesale exodus, one informant whose parents owned a farm in Russia, told the writer that a year before the migration began they were offered ten thousand rubles for their house and land, whereas twelve months later they sold it for two thousand rubles. This ratio of losses was quite a common occurrence among a large number of the immigrants. When the appeal came to the Mennonites already in the United States and Canada, they immediately made plans to come to the assistance of their brethren in the faith.

While the emigrants were preparing to leave their old homes, the Mennonites in America were making preparations to receive them and to help them to their destination. As early as 1874 the Western District Conference of the General Conference of Mennonites appointed a relief committee for the collection of funds to aid the cause. About the same time a similar organization was formed among the "Old" Mennonites in the Middle West. The Pennsylvania and Ontario "Old" Mennonites effected similar organizations. The combined work of these committees and those who supported them is the very finest demonstration of brotherly kindness and mutual help of fellow believers in time of need. A further evidence of the aid the American Mennonites extended to their Russian brethren is revealed in the following account related by C. Henry Smith:

> These various committees, with their special representatives at the ports of Hamburg and New York, and manifesting a fine spirit of cooperation, perfected an organization whose influence was felt from the plains of Manitoba and Kansas to the steppes of south Russia. Every detail of the long journey from the beginning to the end was carefully prescribed and the safety and comfort of the immigrants provided for at every step of the way. At Hamburg the Board of Guardians had stationed . . . a reliable Mennonite whose duty it was to meet the prospective immigrants as they arrived overland at that port of

embarkation, and provide for all their necessary needs, such as changing Russian rubles to the coin of western Europe, or America if necessary; directing them to their proper ships; buying their tickets to New York, or perhaps clear to their western destination, and protecting them against rival shipping companies, and unscrupulous rascals of all sorts. At New York the newcomers were met by members of the committees, representatives of the railroad companies with whom contracts for passage had been made, and later by friends and relatives who had preceded them. Contracts with both ships and railroad companies were made on much more favorable terms than could have been secured by the immigrants themselves.[26]

It is impossible to state exactly how much money was actually raised to support these migrations of Mennonites. Smith estimates the total cash raised in the United States for this project to be not less than $75,000.00.[27] In Canada, not only did friends of the immigrants raise funds from private sources, but a bill was presented to the House of Commons by the Ontario Mennonites in request of a loan for $100,000.00. This bill was presented to the House and precipitated an interesting discussion as to the value of Mennonites as settlers in the development of the West. In one of the speeches by a member of Parliament in defense of the Mennonites, a high tribute was paid, giving testimony to the fact that Mennonites had a reputation for being good co-operators. This spokesman maintained that the Mennonites were different from other settlers in that they usually came to stay and build permanent homes[28] . . . and that their success as colonists was due to the fact that they were a closely knit group held together by religious as well as social bonds, and that in case of crisis they would stand together shoulder to shoulder, thus weathering many storms which other settlers, not united by this spirit of co-operation, would not be able to survive.

The bill, with a few amendments, was passed and the total amount of the loan was $88,000.00, the full payment of which was guaranteed by a group of Ontario Mennonites. This confidence placed in their Russian brethren whom they hardly knew, greatly impressed the House of Commons, and no doubt served as a factor in gaining sufficient support to pass the bill. In the United States and Canada it is estimated by Smith that close to $200,000.00 was raised for the Russian immigrants either as outright gifts or as loans.[29] In addition, many kind deeds were performed whose value

26. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 108 ff.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Park and Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 81 ff. Discusses the difference between a colonist and a settler.

29. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 108 ff.

could never be estimated in dollars and cents. Among the greatest of these immeasurable acts of kindness was the practice of the American Mennonites of taking the dependent immigrant families and individuals into their homes for weeks or months until sufficient funds could be secured to send the immigrants to their destinations in the West.

The special relief committee which had been organized to take care of the immigrant brethren organized and outlined a program which it hoped would help to solve the problem by means of self-support. The main provisions of this program were:

1. The able bodied were to secure as much work as possible in nearby communities.
2. As many as possible were to settle on cheap lands.
3. Loans were to be secured from financially able men in the East to equip the renters and homesteaders with stock and farm machinery.
4. The railroads were to carry a certain amount of their freight free of charge.[30]

It will be evident then that not all the relief was pure charity. The recipients were to help themselves wherever possible by working and living economically, and loans were to be repaid if agreements had been made. This was generally done, as in the case of the loan to the Canadian Government which was repaid to the penny, a feat which the Minister of the Interior at that time said was unparalleled in the history of Canada. This expression of help by the American Mennonites was another illustration of mutual aid in its simplest form. It was done purely with unselfish motives, simply as an expression of Christian brotherhood and a bearing of one another's burden. This practice of combining mutual efforts to accomplish a common problem has enabled the Mennonites to weather storms of many kinds throughout the centuries. This example of mutual aid by one group of Mennonites to another is simply one more instance in an already long list of mutual aid practices among the Mennonites.

### *Mutual Aid Among Mennonites in America*

Because the Mennonites in America are scattered widely from Pennsylvania to California, and from Ontario to British Columbia, and because of the differences or divisions within the Mennonites themselves, it is impossible to speak of American Mennonites as one

30. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 108 ff.

group. The illustrations that will be used in this part of the study are, however, as representative of the various groups of Mennonites as possible. Fundamentally there is very little difference in the ultimate aims of life, or religious beliefs, and of economic and political outlook, despite the separate organizations which found their causes in difference of opinion over such matters as the mode of baptism, what constitutes proper dress, the question of using musical instruments in churches, and the like.

The mutual aid practices within the various communities are similar throughout. Each community may have an organization to meet its own peculiar needs. Some mutual aid practices seem to be universally characteristic of Mennonites. One of these is the practice of providing for their own poor and orphans. It is a very uncommon thing for Mennonites to send their dependent members to county or state institutions. If the particular local church conference does not have an established institution for the purpose of caring for its aged and poor, provision is often made for them in private homes of friends or of relatives. Dr. Abraham Warkentin, in his *Who's Who Among the Mennonites,* lists fourteen old people's homes and seven orphanages which are maintained by the Mennonites.[31] A second mutual aid practice which is very common to most Mennonite communities is that of providing hospital care. Of hospitals that are owned, or partly owned, by Mennonites, Warkentin lists fourteen.[32] Many of these hospitals and old people's homes are located in the same locality, thus making it convenient to provide medical care for the aged and also making it easier to manage the two institutions under one head. The fact that Mennonites are concerned with such matters as care for their own sick and for their economically under-privileged reveals the depth of feeling and the sense of mutual responsibility that they have for each other. It is likewise an evidence that the Mennonites are not trying to escape the responsibility of providing for the welfare of their own dependents, but that they assume it as part of their Christian duty.

A third phase of mutual aid among Mennonites is fire and storm insurance societies. It seems significant that the mutual aid organizations are especially strong wherever loss from causes beyond the control of man are suffered, such as sharing responsibility for losses due to fire, storm, accident, sickness and death. The insurance plan is undoubtedly the oldest form of organized mutual aid among the

31. A. Warkentin, *Who's Who Among the Mennonites,* (Bethel College, Kansas, 1937), p. 168.

32. *Ibid.*

Mennonites. The earliest records available show that mutual insurance was practiced by Mennonites in the beginning of the seventeenth century, and had its origin among the Mennonites in Germany in 1663, when a group then living in the Province of West Prussia, organized the *Tiegenhofer Privat Brandordnung.* This association is still alive and in operation for the protection of those people of the Mennonite faith who live in that Province and maintains offices at Tiegenhof, West Prussia.[33]

Practically every Mennonite community has its own fire insurance society based on the principle of mutual aid. These societies are very old in America, some dating back at least a hundred years. Very often they existed for years in unorganized forms without written constitutions whereby to govern themselves, and many of them did not keep records of proceedings of business conducted. As a case in point, the present secretary of the Amish Mutual Fire Insurance Association of Atglen, Pennsylvania, says that his society was compelled to incorporate under the laws of the State of Pennsylvania in 1929, but it had been operating for at least ninety years before that. He said: "I cannot tell how long it has been in operation but before 1850 this was called the Amish Aid Society."[34]

In much the same way the Sonnenberg Mutual Insurance Association of Dalton, Ohio, was organized on August 9, 1859, by a group of about eighty Swiss Mennonite farmers, but it was not incorporated until 1905 under the laws of the State of Ohio.[35] This organization displays one further characteristic of many mutual aid societies in that it originally admitted only Mennonites as members. In 1905 when it incorporated under the State laws it asked for permission to spread out over a larger area and increase its membership in order to reduce the individual premium rates. In order to get more members, it had to take into its organization non-Mennonites. It decided to follow this policy and continues to follow it to this day. Obviously, by doing so, it lost its distinctness as a purely Mennonite organization. Identical illustrations could be cited by naming a number of other Mennonite aid societies. This is not the case in the more conservative Mennonite churches. They adhere strictly to the policy of admitting only Mennonites into their societies.

In addition to mutual aid institutions that are characteristic of every Mennonite community, there are some mutual aid activities

33. Statement by Joseph G. Kennel, personal letter, March 10, 1938.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Statement by E. E. Kirchhofer, personal letter, September 11, 1937.

which are peculiar to a particular region, community, or even to a single institution. One of these institutions is the Mennonite Aid Society with headquarters at Mountain Lake, Minnesota. It is a life insurance company organized on a mutual aid principle. It is the only society of its kind among the Mennonites. The membership in this society, numbering approximately 3,000, is spread over the United States and Canada, and even to the foreign mission fields operated by Mennonites. It is the only Mennonite aid society that is national and even international in character, so far as is known to the writer. Because of the more detailed discussion of this organization in a later article it will not be treated at greater length here.

An illustration of mutual aid societies peculiar to certain regions is a type—or rather three types—peculiar to the Mennonites in Canada. The first of these is the *Waisenamt,* or orphans' bank. This institution was brought along from Russia. It is an administrative agency which functions in the capacity of a trust company. In western Canada the *Waisenamt* has played a very important part in the life of the people. It was especially helpful to the newcomers who could talk only the German language when they arrived in their newly adopted land. While at first only an aid society, primarily for the help of orphans, it gradually expanded into wider fields until it was recognized by the Provincial Government of Manitoba as performing the same functions performed by banks and trust companies. In addition to administering estates of orphans, it looked after estates of the deceased in general when requested to do so, it loaned money and received it on deposit, it invested incomes and paid interest on savings, and even held auction sales when requested to do so. The *Waisenamt* was distinctly a church organization and not a community-controlled institution, although it did occasionally render services to other than Mennonites, if requested to do so.[36]

A second type of mutual aid not found in any Mennonite communities except those in Canada, is the mutual aid burial society. These organizations are formed to insure its members respectable burial. Individuals who might not be able to afford a good burial, may be able to satisfy their desires by organizing a mutual association. These burial societies are found among numerous non-Mennonite immigrant groups in the United States, particularly in many of the co-operative minded Scandinavian sections of the country, but so far as is known to the writer, there are no burial societies on

36. A. D. Friesen, personal letters, September 8, 1938 and January 28, 1938.

the mutual aid basis in any of the Mennonite communities in the United States.

A third unique form of mutual aid in Canada is the established Girls' Home which is found in a number of the larger cities of western Canada such as Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Vancouver. Many of the Mennonite girls go to these cities to find work. In order not to lose them to the church, and in order to prevent demoralization by evil urban influences, the various Church conferences have established homes for girls where they can live in fellowship with each other. Anyone familiar with the difficulties which individuals with a rural background have in adjusting themselves to an urban environment will understand the valuable service these homes can render. In many cases these girls return to their communities and marry. Having had respectable living and working conditions and the guardianship of a house mother, the girls can retain their self respect and withstand the evils of a modern city. In this way too the girls generally remain loyal to the church.

While mutual hospitals are not unique among the Canadian Mennonites, the particular method of operating at least one hospital seems distinct enough to merit special mention. In one sense it is mutual aid in medical service on a systematic basis as distinguished from mutual support of a hospital on the purely voluntary basis. Of the way hospital service and medical care is provided in Altona, Manitoba, A. D. Friesen writes the following:

> The hospital is organized among the Mennonites but it is not confined to them. All the churches are supposed to take part in supporting it. The municipality is helping along too. Most of the support comes voluntarily. In building the hospital, all the work such as carpentering and painting, was gratis. The patients have to pay either $1.75 per day or buy a family contract under which the whole family gets treatment from the doctor and hospital care for $18.00 per year. The hospital was organized for the benefit of the poor who could not pay the high doctor bills and hospitalization costs in the cities. In this way nearly every family can find it possible to bring its sick to the hospital.[37]

Most of the Mennonites in Canada, with the exception of those in Ontario, came from Russia within the course of the last sixty-five years. It is only natural that they should bring their institutions along and attempt to use them in this country as they did in the old one. Not only did they bring with them many of their patterns of organization of societies, such as the *Waisenamt,* fire insurance societies, hospitals, old folks' homes, and Bible schools, but in some instances they attempted to set up whole village communities on the

37. A. D. Friesen, personal letters, September 8, 1937 and January 28, 1938.

basis of their old homes in Russia. At one time there were about one hundred such villages, but all but about twenty of these have disappeared. Those still remaining are in the Reinland district in the Western Reserve among the most conservative Mennonite groups.[38]

A necessary part of the whole picture of mutual aid among the Mennonites must include the most recent migration and settlement. Since the coming of the Soviet Government into power in Russia, a large number of Mennonites fled from that country. They established two colonies in South America, one in Brazil and another in Paraguay. These settlements were not only for themselves but for all future refugees from the Soviet. The establishment of the colonies was part of a long and weary struggle of these refugees to get out of Russia, thence going overland to Germany and there awaiting aid from their brethren throughout the world. The South American colonies were attempts to re-establish the life and social institutions as the Mennonites had had them in Russia. As an evidence of the mutual aid displayed in helping these people settle, Mennonites from American and Canadian communities sent to Paraguay money, clothing and valuable counsel. The Mennonites in Holland likewise advanced funds, food and clothing, to the colony in Brazil, and in addition supported the first schools, supplied one cow for each family, and provided money to establish flour and saw mills.

Not only was mutual aid practiced from without in establishing the colonies but the migrating Mennonites practiced many forms of mutual aid among themselves. An agricultural co-operative society was formed in Brazil within the first year. Every family in the community was to be a member of this co-operative society. Co-operative stores and a co-operative creamery were organized several years later. The leader of the Brazil colonists said:

> Only one who has had the opportunity to observe how the unorganized German colonists in this country have had to struggle in desperation and often practically sell themselves into slavery to the private merchants in order to get credit, can appreciate what a blessing the co-operative has been to our colony and still is. In other colonies many have had to give up. We thank God and our brethren who have made it possible to establish our co-operative.[39]

It will be noticed that mutual aid within this colony has taken the form of business organizations rather than the benevolent type so common throughout other Mennonite communities. Both the necessity of working together and the experience in Russia with

38. Smith, *Coming of the Russian Mennonites*, p. 194 ff.

39. Peter Klassen, "Mennonites in Brazil," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, April, 1937, p. 108 ff.

mutual aid as a successful method of accomplishing desired goals, possibly accounts for resort to mutual aid as a way of establishing a colony.

In addition to these evidences of economic co-operation, the Mennonites of Brazil gave further evidence of resourcefulness in discovering ways to work together for the common good. In order to bring in much needed cash for the colony's goods that had to be purchased, the young women were sent out to the larger cities to find work in private homes and factories. Likewise, the men went outside the colony to find work on road construction jobs, in nurseries and any other places where jobs were to be found. In this way much of the needed cash was supplied to the colony, which helped greatly in getting the settlement economically on a sound basis.

Similar methods were used in Paraguay. These colonies in Brazil and Paraguay are less than a decade old. Everyone has had to suffer hardship and endure pain; all have had to deny themselves many pleasures that they were once used to, but after ten years of unrelinquished determination it appears that the settlements will be financially successful.

It is altogether probable that new forms of co-operation or mutual aid will develop as the colonies grow and expand. Certainly the Mennonites in this new land are building on a structure based on mutual efforts. Their stores, creamery, saw mills and flour mill, all mutually owned, seem to point the way for further co-operative development. Undoubtedly more forms of mutual aid could be reported if one could get first-hand information from the settlers. To date very little has been written about the life of these South American Mennonites.

Mutual aid activities, found only in individual churches and not as common throughout the entire Mennonite Church, are illustrated in the case of the First Mennonite Church at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Members of this church organized what is known as the Menno-Friendly Beneficial Association. The by-laws of this society state that "the object of this Association shall be to give relief to its members who shall be confined to their homes by reason of sickness, or disability or accident, and to provide a benefit fund in the event of the death of a member." The membership of the Association numbered 155 in 1937. The qualifications for membership are not limited to Mennonites but the applicant must meet a number of qualifications, such as not being engaged in the wholesaling or retailing of alcoholic liquors and only believing "in the Triune

God, and the Holy Bible, and of Protestant Faith." This organization was formed in 1902. It seems to vary from the typical mutual aid society. The name itself indicates that it might have been influenced by the English Friendly Society idea rather than the more characteristic continental form of mutual aid society.[40]

For hundreds of years it has been the custom for Mennonites to express their feeling of mutual responsibility through unorganized channels. When, for instance, a member of a church suffered loss by fire, storm, hail or even accidental death, it was the established custom for one or more appointed or elected brethren of the church to call on each of the other brethren and take subscriptions of money or material provision for the person who had suffered loss. Gradually this method developed into formal organizations with officers and a set amount of assessment for each member. This is the background of the present-day mutual aid societies. However, many forms of mutual aid are still practiced in this unorganized fashion among the Mennonites of every community. There are still a number of communities where life insurance is looked upon as decidedly unchristian. To many insuring oneself against death indicates a lack of trust in God; they feel that it is a way of "getting ahead" of God. Since God is the giver of life and the One to take it away, He might take away life as a punishment for sin, and if people insured their lives against death and then received money to lighten the loss of a widow or a family of children, it seemed like lessening God's punishment. There are still many Mennonites who are opposed to insurance for these and similar reasons. There are many more who believe life insurance unchristian but who are policyholders in fire and storm insurance societies. A further evidence of the prejudice against insurance is the fact that among Mennonites the organizations providing insurance were called mutual aid societies. This term seemed to have a more brotherly connotation; it implied a mutual willingness for one brother to come to the aid of another in time of need.

In these communities where life insurance, and all forms of insurance for that matter, are looked upon with disfavor, mutual aid is still practiced in a purely voluntary way as the spirit of God may prompt each individual to act. If a man dies without having left provision for his widow and family, the members of the church feel it their Christian duty to care for the survivors of the deceased. If one member suffers loss from fire or storm the other members will come to the aid of the victim, and help him for days if necessary,

40. Letter from Joseph Bechtel.

aiding him to remove the debris and rebuild his barn, if that building happened to be the object of destruction. There is never a thought of charging for labor. In the fall of the year it is common for a number of farmers to assist each other in butchering hogs and beef. The men do the killing and cutting into portions and the women fry or cook the meat in order to can it, as well as make the by-products such as lard, sausage and scrapple. In going from farm to farm helping each other with common tasks, the long winter days are brightened with opportunities for sociability along with work. Similar practices are common among the farmers during the threshing season in the summer and during the corn harvesting in the fall. In some communities, farmers render similar assistance to one another in filling ice houses in the winter months. The writer recalls vividly how these jobs on the farm were enjoyed when they were done through group effort. They were times of fellowship and fun and resulted in the accomplishment of tasks that would have taken many times longer to do had they been attempted individually.

Another illustration of mutual aid in a common task is that of farmers assisting each other in time of moving from one farm to another. In order for one farmer to move all his stock, implements, tools, utensils and crops to a farm several miles away, months would be required to do the task if done alone. Through mutual efforts the task can be done within a day or two. The practice of mutual aid in such cases is still a common one. Each farmer brings his team of horses and a large wagon. The first load is usually from the family kitchen, such as the stove, dishes, food, utensils and items essential to the preparation of a meal. This load is immediately taken to the new home and installed there. The women at once begin to prepare food so that by the time all the rest of the men arrive with their cargoes, dinner will be ready. There is no thought of charging for this service; in fact it is counted a privilege to help in such an enterprise because of the fun and enjoyment that result from such a frolic.

The women, too, have their mutual aid activities among the Mennonites. The most common form is that of the quilting societies. Usually one is formed in each church. The women meet weekly or semi-monthly, as the case may be, in the church or in the home of one of the members to sew garments and bedding of various sorts, usually for a benevolent cause outside the church such as relief for victims of floods or famine, or for their own society. As is the case in all mutual aid activity, not only is the work more easily and quickly done through mutual effort, but through it a wholesome

Christian social intercourse is possible. Through mutual aid activities, both organized and unorganized, Christian fellowship has an opportunity to exercise itself.

In concluding this discussion, it is entirely proper to emphasize the tremendous importance of the church itself as a factor in motivating mutual aid among Mennonites. Not that the church directly encourages the formation of mutual aid societies—in most cases it does not do so. Rather the church is the center of the fellowship of believers, and exerts its influence through the members. In the beginning of this discussion it was mentioned that the Mennonites attempted to build a holy community. The church is the center of this community. Since the true Mennonite is opposed to secret societies of all kinds and since he shuns all "worldly" amusements such as dancing, theatres, amusement parks and the like, he has few opportunities for sociability and fellowship outside the church. It is through the church that he gets his code of ethics, receives his social status in the community, receives his spiritual blessings, and enjoys his Christian fellowship. Being largely in a rural community, the average Mennonite does not get in contact with the large number of cultural elements of a large city which would tend to influence his behavior. His contacts limited to the culture of the local community, and his devotion and obedience to the local church usually beyond question, it is natural that he should find the center of his social life in the church. Furthermore, it is only natural that he should wish to express his Christian beliefs through practices of mutual helpfulness to his brethren. Thus in a very real sense, the Mennonite mutual aid activities are expressions of the teachings of the Mennonite Church regarding the principle of love and brotherhood in daily life.

(To be continued)

# WITH THE MENNONITE REFUGEE COLONIES IN BRAZIL AND PARAGUAY

## A Personal Narrative

Harold S. Bender

### I. *Brazil*

A few short years ago there were no Mennonites in Brazil, except perhaps one family in Rio de Janeiro, Frederick Arentz, who left his home in Hamburg some forty years ago. Today there are at least fifteen hundred Mennonites in this great land, approximately three hundred families. It has been my privilege to spend the past ten days visiting these people, and as I sit here in my hotel room in the city of Curityba tonight, the evening of July 1, waiting for the plane that is to take me to the Mennonites of Paraguay, I have been trying to gather my impressions into one composite picture of the Mennonites of Brazil. Perhaps those interested in Mennonite life and history may be interested in a brief account of what I have observed during these past ten days.

My contact with the Mennonites of Brazil started last Sunday, when I reached Rio after a five-day flight by Pan-American plane from Miami, Florida. Frederick Arentz, mentioned above, was at the airport to meet me on arrival, a most welcome reception in a totally strange land. The Arentz family showed me splendid Christian hospitality. I was happy to learn that Mr. Arentz still holds firmly to Mennonite principles, even though he has not had the privilege of direct connection with a church of his faith for forty years. He has reared his four sons in this same faith, and all of them have clung to the nonresistant faith of their fathers; so that they have refused military service, preferring to lose their "political" rights rather than their faith. The price they had to pay was surrender of all rights to vote and hold office; after all, not such a serious loss.

On Tuesday the plane again took me about five hundred miles down the coast to Paranagua, where another Mennonite met me, Heinrich Martins, of Blumenau in the state of Santa Catharina, who had traveled a day and a night by train and bus to the port. Mr. Martins was the leader of the first group of Mennonite refugees from Russia who settled in Brazil in February, 1930. Though

it took us practically two days to reach his home, where we arrived late Thursday night, the fellowship during the journey was very pleasant, and was a splendid introduction to the Mennonites of Brazil, whom Mr. Martins knows as perhaps no one else does. At the present time he is bookkeeper in a large export firm in the thoroughly German city of Blumenau, although for the past five years he had been a teacher in the German school in the city until it was closed recently by the government.

From Blumenau it is only about one hundred kilometers to the large Russian Mennonite settlement in the Krauel valley, but we were on the road all day, traveling steadily from six in the morning till six in the evening. It was winter in Brazil, and even though that does not mean snow and ice, it means cool weather and rain in this region. Heavy rains had made the roads almost impassable, and since the last forty miles of our route had to be over primitive, partly mountainous roads, we had some interesting experiences before we reached the Mennonite settlement, driving in a light coach with four horses struggling through deep mud and rain. Altogether during the next four days we traveled over 150 miles over these almost impassable frontier roads, chiefly in light farm wagons. But the hospitality enjoyed in the Mennonite settlements made up for the hardships passed through in reaching them.

Two days were spent in the main settlement here, which is located in a narrow valley between mountains which often reach three thousand feet in height. About 160 refugee families were settled in the valley in 1930 with the aid of the German government and the Dutch Mennonite Relief Committee. The colony is organized into three villages, the chief one bearing the name "Witmarsum," after Menno Simons' birthplace in Holland. The other two are named Gnadental and Waldheim.

With the aid of thousands of Dutch guilders, a sawmill, a starch factory for extracting starch from the roots of the aipim plant which is the chief money crop in the colony, and a modest hospital have been built. The settlers themselves have cleared on an average ten acres apiece of their fifty acre tracts which they bought from a land company, and have gradually brought considerable land under cultivation, with aipim as the chief crop. They have had to work very hard, for the land was covered with thick Brazilian forest which had never been touched by the hand of man, and much of the land is very hilly. Their labor has been made harder by the forty miles of bad roads which they must cover with their wagons before reaching the nearest market town. However they have made en-

couraging progress, have built themselves modest homes and schools, and are looking forward with confidence to the future, happy to have been delivered from the terrible conditions under which they had to live in Russia. They are still bitterly poor, and probably will remain so for another generation, for they still have debts to pay on their land and to the German government for transportation, and the average cash income per family certainly does not exceed two *contos de reis* in Brazilian currency, which equals about $100 of our money at the present rate of exchange. This is approximately the salary of the schoolteachers and other officials of the colony. The doctor alone, also a Mennonite refugee gets the enormous salary of about $20 per month and house rent. Yet, since prices are low, they are able to get along. The elder of the Brüder Gemeinde church in the colony, a truthful man, told me that the family of four for which he is the provider, gets along on about 50 milreis or $2.50 cash per month for living expenses. Living conditions are naturally still very primitive in every respect, yet I found as much contentment, if not more, here among these struggling, poverty-stricken Mennonite refugee families, as among our wealthy and prosperous Mennonite farming communities in North America, where autos, tractors, radios, pianos, etc., are counted as necessities of life.

The two leading groups of Russian Mennonites are represented in this colony, although, the one, the Brüder Gemeinde, has about eighty per cent of the people, and most of the twenty preachers, while the other group, the so-called "Kirchen-Gemeinde" is weaker. Gerhard Rosenfeld, the elder or bishop of the Brüder Gemeinde, is fully aware of the dangers both moral and spiritual, which face this small, struggling group of Mennonites who are trying to maintain the faith of their fathers in a strange land. He is chairman of the so-called K. f. K., a joint committee of church leaders, (Kommission fur Kirchliche Angelegenheiten) which supervises the religious life of the settlement. Until this month, the colony has had its own German Christian schools, (three elementary and one high school), poor as they are, but the new laws of Brazil forbidding foreign language schools with foreign teachers, make it probable that these schools will have to close, which means a very serious loss to the settlement. It is worthy of note in passing, that the colony maintains a co-operative store, and operates the sawmill and starch factory on a co-operative basis. The entire colony is organized into three villages, each under a leader known as a "Schulz," all under the leadership of a colony leader, called "Oberschulz," who at present is preacher David Nikkel, a fine and capable man.

Part of the original group of refugees who came to Brazil were settled on a neighboring plateau, about five miles away, called Stoltz Plateau. This settlement, formerly about eighty families, has now been reduced to less than thirty by emigration, so that it is now very small, almost too small to maintain itself. It was a pleasure however to visit them, and to note their steadfastness, patience and hope under trying circumstances—a pleasure also to eat oranges and bananas from young Mennonite orchards here. The bishop or elder of the Brüder Gemeinde on Stoltz Plateau, Johannes Janzen, formerly of Turkestan, Russia, is the schoolteacher of the colony, and is also a capable painter. He has promised to paint some typical scenes from the Mennonite colonies in Brazil for the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College.

After a day on Stoltz Plateau, I started out for the last and youngest Mennonite settlement in Brazil, a group of nearly a hundred families living near the large city of Curityba, capital of the state of Parana, a city of 130,000 people about 150 miles from Blumenau, first mentioned above. My experiences in reaching this city demonstrate the rather primitive character of Brazilian transportation; for although the first part of the journey was covered efficiently, even over mountain roads, with a very modern, up-to-date Chevrolet bus with a diesel motor, a total of 26 weary hours was spent in covering this distance. The small, dirty, puffing, wood-burning train was due to arrive at 7:30 p. m. at its destination after an all-day run covering about 120 miles, but we did not arrive until 5 a. m. the next morning, nine hours late, and no pullman sleepers furnished the weary passengers. The next day the same train was 11 hours late. But the passengers took it good-naturedly, apparently having learned the good Brazilian virtue (?) of "patientia," which means, take things easy. Even a casual traveler in Brazil soon sees that there has been and still is far too much *patientia* in Brazil, a wonderfully rich country, with a very backward population, low standards of living, and much poverty and ignorance.

In Curityba I was met by Franz Goerz, one of the first settlers here, who moved from the Krauel colony about 7 years ago, hoping to find a place where he could have a better chance to make a living. A total of about 80 families have followed him to date, the last ones having arrived a few months ago. The mother colony at the Krauel and Stoltz Plateau, as well as the Holland Committee and the German government, have been bitterly disappointed by this emigration. Not only has the loss of 80 families seriously weakened the mother colony, but the new settlement, close to a large city, and

lacking good leaders, is exposed to great moral and spiritual dangers. In consequence of the emigration, considerable bitterness has developed between the two colonies, so that even today they are unable to find any basis for co-operation, not even in a church conference. May the time soon come when this strife will be a thing of the past, and the two colonies will work together in every way, for surely these two small Mennonite settlements in a foreign land need each other badly.

The settlement at Curityba is altogether different in character from that at the Krauel. Here the land is a level plain, much like Kansas, at an elevation of almost three thousand feet. The Mennonites of Curityba are practically all dairy farmers, each having about 15 acres of land and 10 to 15 cows. In a short time the Mennonites have almost captured the milk business of this city, and every morning about fifty Mennonite milk wagons can be seen driving to town delivering bottled milk. Materially the Curityba settlement is much better off than the one at the Krauel, but spiritually it is worse off. Great dangers face this settlement, which now has almost 400 souls. Many of the young people are attracted to the city, and the church does not seem to be strong enough to stem the tide. The leaders who sense the problem are much discouraged.

Due to lack of time I was unable to visit the group of some sixty young Mennonite men and women who are working in the great, busy city of Sao Paulo; some as domestics, some as clerks, etc. I hope it will not be long till these young people find their way back to their homes in the colonies, where they are badly needed, and where they will be protected from the evil influences to which they are subjected in the great million population city of Sao Paulo.

When the Mennonite settlements were established in Brazil, no one thought that they would have any difficulty in maintaining their German language, their German schools, and their traditional way of life as they had it in Russia. Unfortunately, the wave of nationalistic feeling which is now sweeping Brazil has led to the enactment of drastic anti-foreign legislation, which means, if carried out to the letter, that no schools or cultural, social, or economic organizations can be maintained by foreigners in Brazil. This places our Mennonite colonies, together with the other foreign groups in Brazil, in a very serious situation. Our Russian Mennonite people are German. They have great difficulties to conquer in establishing their settlements in a material way. If during this trying time they cannot have their own schools, conducted in their own language and by their own Mennonite teachers, and must send their children to Bra-

zilian schools taught by Portuguese (or rather Brazilian) teachers, they lose one of the chief means they have to teach and train their children in the faith of their fathers. The Mennonites of Brazil, as everywhere else in the world must keep themselves rather separate from the surrounding world if they expect to maintain their faith, but in Brazil they face the further danger of assimilation in a culture and way of life which is morally, intellectually, socially, and in every other way much lower than their own. It is easy to adopt this lower standard of living, but if this takes place with the oncoming generation, the Mennonites of Brazil are lost to Mennonitism. They have a hard struggle ahead, a severe conflict with the forces which would tear down what has been built up over many generations, and to have to go through this struggle in the midst of a desperate struggle for a material existence makes things doubly hard. The main colony on the Krauel is fighting a valiant battle. The Curityba colony is weaker on this point, and the Sao Paulo group are in the greatest danger of all. If the present nationalistic wave does not retreat, but rather increases in force, and if the Mennonites of Brazil lose all their cultural and religious institutions, except possibly their church life, they will be placed in the greatest danger. It will be the duty and privilege of the Mennonite relief organizations, and the Mennonite Church round the world, to help in every way possible. Even then it may not be possible to maintain real Mennonitism in Brazil under this terrific handicap. If so, nothing will remain, if the Mennonites of Brazil are to save themselves, but to seek to find a new home elsewhere, as they did when they left Russia in 1929-30.

Curityba, Brazil, July 1, 1938.

## II. *In Paraguay*

The capital of Paraguay, Asuncion, lies almost directly west of Curityba, about 500 miles distant, but the route is over trackless, impassable tropical forests. Until last year the trip had to be made by boat down the coast to Buenos Aires, and then up the Paraguay River by boat or by rail, a total distance of over 2000 miles, requiring at the very best eight days' time. The new Pan-American Airways route covers the direct trip to Asuncion in three hours, and at considerable saving of expense. So on the wings of a fleet airplane I was able to reach Paraguay, the home of over 4,000 Mennonites, in a short time and with a minimum of expense.

At the airport of Asuncion I was met by a group of six Mennonites who represent to some extent the various types of Mennonites

in Paraguay today. In the group was, by chance, J. A. Braun, the "Oberschulz" or leader of the very conservative Canadian colony in the Chaco, called the "Colonia Menno." Then there were several men living in Asuncion and engaged in business there; particularly Franz Heinrichs, formerly leader of the Russian Mennonite colony in the Chaco, called "Colonia Fernheim," who now owns and operates with success a bus line in Asuncion. Among the others was a young Mennonite from the Chaco who is attending school in Asuncion and working his way by clerking in a store; a former Mennonite who now operates a fleet of taxis in Asuncion, and the business manager of the colony Fernheim who was in Asuncion to sell the cotton of the colony. In spite of the fact that the Mennonites came to Paraguay as farmers, there are now over sixty of them, about ten families, living in the city, including perhaps about twenty-five young people who are attending school or working in homes and clerking in stores. An attempt is made to hold the group together by holding services Sunday afternoons in the German church, and by occasional social gatherings for the young people, but it is difficult to maintain high ideals of faith and life in the midst of the destructive influences of the city, where the low standards of life which are so common in Paraguay find their full expression. There is a real need for effective work in Asuncion among young and old, especially the young people, and the Mennonite ministerial body of the Chaco needs help in providing regular ministerial visits or in establishing a permanent work in the city under a resident pastor. I appreciated very much the kindness of Franz Heinrichs, who was a great help in my work in the city, and who is glad to receive all foreign Mennonite visitors who come to Paraguay.

Paraguay is a small country compared to its great neighbors—Brazil, Argentina, and Bolivia—but it is after all rather large, especially when one includes the Chaco, itself a territory larger than the state of Ohio. It is very thinly populated, with less than a million people, and is very poor and undeveloped, with practically no roads or railroads. The broad Paraguay River, which bisects the country from north to south and is navigable for large ships, is the great and cheap artery of transportation. This country has enormous quantities of undeveloped fertile land and needs above everything else man power, which it can get only by immigration. For this reason the Mennonite settlers from Canada and Russia were welcomed with open arms by the government and given every aid and favor, including a tremendous grant of privileges which includes virtual self-government in the Chaco, absolute freedom in every

respect, and exemption from taxes and import duty for ten years. The Mennonite settlers have amply repaid these favors by creating in a few short years (first settlement in 1927, second in 1930) flourishing colonies which have increased the wealth and prosperity of the nation appreciably. Last year, for instance, the Mennonites produced one-third of all the cotton produced in Paraguay. The native Paraguayans are very poor farmers, and the government expects great stimulus from the Mennonite colonies. I am reporting this, not because economic and material concerns are the most important, but merely to show that the Mennonites are not unworthy immigrants drawing from the land only selfish gain, but a valuable asset to the country, who are fulfilling their obligations to the land which has given them asylum.

I wish it were possible to speak of the Mennonites of Paraguay as one united body, but alas, this is not the case. The largest group is the Canadian colony, "Menno," who migrated to the Chaco from Manitoba in 1927 to maintain their German language and German schools. They are a substantial, prosperous group, very conservative in their beliefs and practices, and living to themselves, desiring little contact with others. Their religious leader is Bishop Martin Friesen. I had the privilege of visiting Bishop Friesen and the Canadian colony, and found him an able man, determined to maintain uncompromisingly the principles of his group, and evidently succeeding in doing so. He has a large farm of 900 acres, and has great authority among his people. The colony has recently organized its economic and civil life under an "Oberschulz," J. A. Braun, whom I also visited, and found him an able and devoted servant of his people. Until recently the Canadians had no colony organization and no industrial enterprises, but now they are following the example of the Russian colony and setting up a complete organization with a cotton gin, saw mill, oil-press, etc., with a central town. The total population of this colony is about 1800, distributed over about 20 villages, occupying a large compact tract of land of many thousand acres.

The second settlement in Paraguay was made by the Russian Mennonite refugees who were brought there by the Mennonite Central Committee of North America in 1930. This group is somewhat larger than the Canadian group, and was settled on adjoining land, north and west of the Canadian colony. Unfortunately the original settlement of over 2000 population of this colony, called "Colonia Fernheim," has lost considerably by emigration, so that today it has only 282 families with approximately 1400 souls. Ap-

proximately 1000 persons have left the colony since its establishment; two hundred of these during the course of the eight years have scattered, a small group of twenty-five families settling near Horqueta, thirty miles inland from Concepcion on the east side of the river, about half-way down the river to Asuncion, and the rest largely in Asuncion, with a few scattered families, including one in Buenos Aires. Approximately 145 families, 800 souls, left the colony in a body a year ago and settled on a tract of land about thirty miles inland from Rosario, another river port on the east side of the Paraguay River, about half-way between Concepcion and Asuncion. This new colony calls itself "Colonia Friesland." I met representatives of the Horqueta group for a brief conference in Concepcion, and spent two days visiting the "Friesland" group, but spent most of my time, a total of ten days, visiting the mother colony in the Chaco, the "Fernheim" colony. This is the most important and most interesting of all the Mennonite groups in the Paraguay, for this group represents the great relief project which was undertaken in 1930 by the Mennonite Central Committee to help the needy refugees from Russia who were at that time in Germany and for which the committee continues to have responsibility. This is also the best organized, the most prosperous, and spiritually the soundest Mennonite colony in Paraguay; and in fact, in my judgment, the outstanding colony in all South America.

The trip from Asuncion to Fernheim is an arduous one. It is something of an adventure with some hardships thrown in along the way. It would be possible to charter a private plane in Asuncion and fly to the colony, landing on one of the broad, flat village streets, as the American Minister in Asuncion plans to do, thus reaching the colony in a pleasant three-hour flight of less than 400 miles. But for various reasons this was impossible, so I took the usual route, side-wheel river steamer upstream from Asuncion to the port of Casado and then inland. The trip upstream lasted from Tuesday afternoon at 5:00 P. M. until Friday morning at 10:00 A. M., due to the frequent stops to load wood for fuel, but the fast down-stream trip on the oil-burning steamer has been made in twenty-four hours, including stops. The actual distance up the winding stream is 320 miles. A narrow gauge railroad of 90 miles runs from the port straight west toward the colony, and the rest of the route must be covered by wagon in fifteen to twenty hours, or by an auto truck in five hours. The total distance from the city of Philadelphia, "capital" of Fernheim, to Asuncion is 70 miles by road, 90 by rail, (total 160 to Casado) and 320 by boat to Asuncion, or 480

miles. The direct airline distance from Philadelphia to Asuncion would be approximately 400 miles.

The Fernheim colony is organized into eighteen villages and one central town, called Philadelphia. Each village is composed of ten to fifteen families, each occupying 250 acres of land. About thirty-five families live in the town, which contains the colony headquarters, the high school, the central store, and the industrial enterprises including the sawmill, cotton gin, oil press, kaffir-flour mill, etc.

In spite of much hardship and difficulty, including two bitter drought years, 1934-36, Fernheim has made remarkable progress in material things. Each family has an average of thirty acres of land under cultivation and owns a team of horses and ten to fifteen head of cattle. Chief crops are cotton, peanuts, kaffir and beans. Last year over a million pounds of cotton were produced in the colony, with one farmer producing over 15,000 pounds. The highest cash income of any one farmer last year was over $600, although the average was considerably lower than this. This year the prospect was for the best crops in the history of the colony, but unfortunately grasshoppers took three-fourths of the cotton, so that the total output was less than a million pounds against an anticipated four million pounds. Some farmers were hit very hard with the entire crop ruined. Prices also have come down. The average cash income this year in Fernheim, per family, is probably less than $100. Some families will need help, but food crops are plentiful, so that the colony as a whole can get through until the next crop without difficulty. Living expenses are fairly cheap, although one must be content with a low standard of living as is evidenced by the fact that the highest salary paid in the colony is $30 per month, while most of the teachers and employees receive approximately half that amount.

In spite of the poor crop this year, the colony is paying a substantial amount on its debt and looks forward with confidence to the future. I found an unexpectedly strong spirit of courage and cheerful optimism. The general feeling seems to be that, while hard times and hardships must still be faced, the worst is past and better times are coming. Economically, Fernheim is at least twice as prosperous as the colony in Brazil, and if reasonable crops can be harvested next year, with reasonable prices, the total cash income of the colony should easily reach $100,000. Thus has God blessed the efforts of these people, who came to Paraguay absolutely penniless and who had to be fed the first year entirely by money furnished them through the Mennonite Central Committee by the churches of North America. From this point of view the enterprise has been

well worth while and Fernheim can be considered a material success.

However, the churches of North America are more interested in the spiritual and cultural life of the Fernheim Mennonites than their material progress. I took considerable time to visit the colony and interviewed the leading men, including preachers, teachers, and leading laymembers and I came away from Fernheim with an excellent impression. Conditions on the whole are good. There is a well-organized, active church life with capable ministers and leaders, a good school system, wholesome moral and spiritual ideals, and a strong devotion to the faith of the fathers which these people brought with them from Russia. They have maintained a staunch Mennonitism thus far and are determined to maintain it in the future, including the principle of complete nonresistance. Cut off as they are from much contact with the outside world, able to provide for themselves, with good leadership, protected by the government in their rights and privileges, Fernheim Mennonites have a unique situation, such as Mennonites have nowhere else in the world today. There are good reasons why most of us from North America would not want to exchange with them, but compared to the lot of their brethren who were not able to escape from Russia, Fernheim Mennonites are living in Paradise. They appreciate this very much, too, and are anxious to prove worthy of their privileges and blessings. They are anxious for fellowship with the Mennonites of North America and look forward to frequent visits from ministers and others from North America. Not everything in Fernheim is perfect, and not everything is as it ought to be, but there is no need to enter into details here. In any case these people will have many years of privation and struggle ahead, with no doubt occasional crop failures and difficulties of various kinds, and they will continue to need sympathy, support, and help for many years to come. An outstanding need is a good Christian doctor. It is a tragic and desperate situation for three thousand people to live 150 miles from the nearest doctor year after year, and to have such dangerous diseases as trachoma, which leads to blindness, increase as it has been increasing in Fernheim until thirty per cent of the people are afflicted with this disease. They have a hospital and dispensary, but need a doctor desperately.

Fernheim is very happy, as all Mennonites are, to know that at last peace has been restored between Bolivia and Paraguay. Now that the war clouds are definitely dispersed, the development of Paraguay will proceed more rapidly, and much good can come for Fernheim. The peace treaty provides, among other things, a free

port for Bolivia at Casado, or near by, which means that the railroad which is to be built from Bolivia to this port will go through the Chaco very near to the colony. This will be a great boon, and will go far toward solving the problem of transportation and markets. It will then be possible to reach the colony by rail all the way from Buenos Aires. May this development be hastened.

A few words in conclusion about the group which split off and settled in the new colony of Friesland. At first the impression went out that these people left Fernheim because of economic necessity, or because they were convinced that it was not possible to make a living in the Chaco. I learned, however, that this is not true. In fact, many of the wealthier and more successful families left the Chaco, some with as much as $1,000 cash which they had accumulated in the colony. It has been estimated that the entire group took at least $25,000 cash with them when they left. The main cause of the emigration was, as several leaders of the Friesland colony told me, dissatisfaction, friction, and party strife in Fernheim, and only ten per cent climate or bad economic conditions. The new colony is located in a better climate, where more fruit and vegetables grow, and is thus to some extent in a better location; but the Chaco colony has much better economic prospects than the new colony.

The new colony also suffers severely from a lack of capable leadership along religious and cultural lines, since all the strong men remained in Fernheim, while only two preachers and two teachers went with the new colony. Also the new colony lives in a Spanish community, without the privileges granted to the Mennonites of the Chaco. It is my conviction, as well as the conviction of others, that the emigration was unnecessary, and was a serious mistake; which not only has weakened the Fernheim colony, but also exposes the new settlers to grave dangers spiritually and morally. They also have the hard task of pioneering in the tropical forests a second time. However, the Mennonites of North America should continue their concern and help for these people as well as those in Fernheim, and I am sure that the Mennonite Central Committee and the churches of North America will do so.

Asuncion, Paraguay, August 5, 1938.

# BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

*Passion in Bern.* Ein Täuferroman um den Schultheisen Johann Friedrich Willading. WALTER LAEDRACH. Eugen Rentsch Verlag, Erlenbach, Zürich und Leipzig [1938], Fr. 7.50.

*Passion in Bern* is a novel of Swiss Mennonite life in the first two decades of the eighteenth century, written by one who is thoroughly acquainted with the history of Berne and its *Täufgesinnten.* The author portrays accurately and sympathetically the tragic story of the Bernese Anabaptist persecutions of some two hundred years ago. Berne had earlier persecuted the Anabaptists very severely, but the last man executed for his separatist views was Hans Haslibacher, 1571. A hundred years later the Bernese Council, however, was still writing mandates against the nonresistant Anabaptists. In fact Berne issued no less than two dozen mandates against them between the years 1658 and 1720. (*Menn. Lexikon,* III, pp. 8f.)

The story opens with a moving scene in the family life of the Emmental farmer, Hans Flückiger. One October evening (about 1707), as he was about to go to help his thirteen-year-old son Peter and his younger boy Hänsli, aged ten, bring home the herd, Flückiger spied a stranger starting the long climb up the hilly road leading to his farm. The farmer, whose good wife Anna was an Anabaptist, was instantly apprehensive. Putting his devout wife into a secret chamber he hurriedly helped the boys bring home the cattle and hastened to watch the approaching stranger.

Meanwhile Anna was quietly praying an old *Ausbund* hymn,

In deepest need I cry to Thee
O God, do hear my sighing.
Thy Holy Spirit send Thou me,
Help us in straits the direst,
As Thou, O Christ, before hast done,
On whose command we've us entrusted,
The heathen would us murder.

The stranger turned out to be a neighborhood youth who was returning crippled from military service in France, and quiet was soon restored in the Flückiger household. On the following day the ex-soldier, Peter Hertig by name, appeared once more at the Flückiger home. He had been rudely turned out of his own brother's house. The half-Anabaptist home welcomed him into its circle, and he was content to live with them while recuperating from a brutal assault received at the hands of a Swiss army officer in France. By the time of his departure from the Flückiger home, Peter and the eighteen-year-old Vreneli had formed a close attachment for one another.

Peter secured work on a Bernese estate, only to once more encounter his one-time officer-enemy, and through exposing his evil life was again savagely attacked and driven from the estate. A thoroughly discouraged Peter sought asylum once more in the Flückiger home. Here an Anabaptist teacher emerged from a secret chamber, comforted the maltreated Peter, and won him for the Anabaptist communion.

In the meanwhile the father of the brutal Swiss officer, an elderly man named Johann Friedrich Willading, had become mayor of Berne. Willading was a determined ruler and a zealous patriot. To him the nonresistant, separatist Christians, who refused to even swear an oath, were a potential danger to the state. Once more therefore a storm of persecution broke over the heads of the innocent Anabaptists. In due time both Anna Flückiger and Peter Hertig were seized by the terrible Anabaptist Hunters (*Taeuferjaeger*), in spite of the general hatred of the Bernese population for the hunters. Anna was imprisoned and fed on bread and water for the greater part of a year. Through Providential leading she escaped from prison. As an emaciated old woman she returned home to die. Contrary to Bernese law her husband buried her on his farm even though she was an Anabaptist. Soon he, too, found himself in prison for harboring Anabaptists. In a great emotional reaction against the state for the slow murder of his wife he decided to cast in his lot with the devout though persecuted Anabaptists. Later he thought through the matter of the state and police force, and returned to the state church. The author's reasoned criticism of the Anabaptists at this point for a supposed rejection of the state is perhaps the weakest point in the book.

Finally Berne decided to deport its fifty-six Anabaptist prisoners to "Carolina" (America). (This emigration project is described in the *Mennonitisches Lexikon,* I, pp. 168-196, and in C. Henry Smith, *The Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania,* 1929, pp. 55-74.) Among the prisoners taken down the Rhine was Peter Hertig. En route he escaped, returned to his Vreneli, was again arrested and finally made a galley-slave. The significant role which the Dutch government and the Dutch Mennonites played in interceding for their persecuted Bernese brethren is clearly described in *Passion in Bern.* The entire "Carolina" deportation project miscarried completely. In the end Berne adopted a milder policy after large numbers of Anabaptists quit the land, and Hertig and his Anabaptist companions were finally released from Sicilian slavery. The book closes with Peter and Vreneli living happily together in peace.

Dr. Laedrach has created a living and moving picture of Anabaptist life in Switzerland some two centuries ago. He manifests a thorough knowledge of the Anabaptist mind. One is especially grateful for the depth of sympathy and understanding which is evident throughout the volume. The book deserves a wide circulation. It would be most appropriate for use in the German classes of Mennonite colleges. It is to be hoped that Dr. Laedrach will turn to other periods of Anabaptist-Mennonite history and produce other volumes of the same quality.

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